R
851.32
A

CONCORDIA LIBRARY
BRONXVILLE, N. Y.

THE LITERATURE OF ITALY

consists of sixteen volumes, of which this one forms a part. For full particulars of the edition see the Official Certificate bound in the volume entitled

"A HISTORY OF ITALIAN LITERATURE."

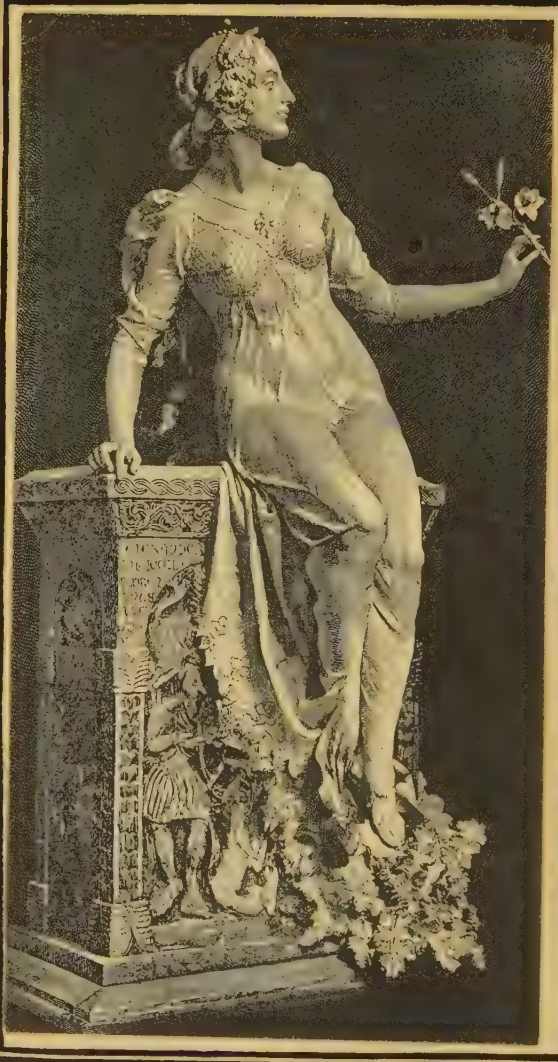
BINDING

THE binding on this volume is a facsimile of the original on exhibition among the Treasures of the Vatican, and is here reproduced, by special permission, for the first time.

It is an Italian binding of the middle of the eighteenth century. The cover is ornamented with a handsome geometrical design, combined with arabesques and blind stamped with heated tools to render portions of the leather darker.

On compartments formed by the pattern are introduced the instruments of the Passion.

The arms stamped in the center of the cover are those of Pope Clement XIII.



Literature of Italy 1265 1907.

Edited by Rossiter Johnson and Dora Knowlton Ranous

With a General Introduction by William Michael Rossetti and Special Introductions by James, Cardinal Gibbons, Charles Eliot Norton, S. G. W. Benjamin, William S. Walsh, Maurice Francis Egan, and others

New translations, and former renderings compared and revised

Translators: James C. Brogan, Lord Charlemont, Geoffrey Chaucer, Hartley Coleridge, Florence Kendrick Cooper, Lady Dacre, Theodore Dwight, Edward Fairfax, Ugo Foscolo, G. A. Greene, Sir Thomas Hoby, William Dean Howells, Luigi Monti, Evangeline M. O'Connor, Thomas Okey, Dora Knowlton Ranous, Thomas Roscoe, William Stewart Rose, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, John Addington Symonds, William S. Walsh, William Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Wyatt

HIS LEVEL SIGHT, ALONG THE WATER THROWN,
NAKED AS BORN, BOUND TO A STUMP, ESPIED
A DAME, WHOSE FEET WERE WETTED BY THE TIDE

From an Engraving by Gustave Doré

HIS LEVEL SIGHT, ALONG THE WATER THRONE,
MARKED AS BORN, BOUND TO A STUMP, ESPIED
A MAN, WHOSE FEET WERE WETTED BY THE TIDE

From an Engraving by Gustave Doré

H 712

ORLANDO FURIOSO

p. Lat.

BY

LUDOVICO ARIOSTO

TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM STEWART ROSE

THE NATIONAL ALUMNI

938

COPYRIGHT, 1906, BY

THE NATIONAL ALUMNI

ILLUSTRATIONS

PAGE

His level sight, along the water thrown,
Naked as born, bound to a stump, espied
A dame, whose feet were wetted by the tide—
(Page 73) . . . . . Frontispiece

Astolpho, as a show, the thief would bring
By city, borough-town, and farm conveyed 115

Agramant to those lords' opinion bent,
Though that hard counsel he could ill endure . . . 270

3215

INTRODUCTION

LUDOVICO ARIOSTO was a native of Lombardy, born in Reggio September 8, 1474. Michelangelo was born the next year. Petrarch and Boccaccio had been in their graves exactly a century; Dante a century and a half. Ariosto's lineage was accounted ancient and honorable. When the poet was born his father was Governor of Reggio, and later he became Governor of Modena. At the age of fifteen the boy produced a drama, founded on the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, which his brothers and sisters (eight of them) performed. As the father, though in receipt of a large income, was lavish in his expenditures, there was no accumulation of wealth in his large family, and it was necessary for the son to acquire a profession. Much against his will he was sent to Padua to study law. At the end of five years this experiment was an acknowledged failure, and he was then permitted to devote himself to literature. He studied especially the Latin authors, and became so proficient that he wrote admired poems in that language. When he was twenty-four, by the death of his father the care of the family devolved upon him, and by skill and economy he managed to educate his brothers and portion off his sisters. When the last of his sisters married, he was forty-five years of age, and their mother was still living under his roof. Meanwhile he wrote five comedies, and began the composition of *Orlando Furioso*. His friend Cardinal Bembo advised him to write the great poem in Latin; but Ariosto answered: "I would rather stand among the first writers in my own tongue than below Ovid or Virgil in theirs." He spent fifteen years upon the *Or-*

lando, writing portions in Ferrara and in Rome, where he was sent as ambassador, but the greater part in the tower of an old villa at Reggio. This poem is a continuation or sequel of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato,* which (unfinished) was published in 1495, a year after the author's death. The first edition of Ariosto's poem appeared in 1516, and in subsequent editions he enlarged and improved it. When the hostile Venetians sent a fleet up the Po, while the Papal forces marched against Ferrara by land, the battle of Ravenna ensued, and Ariosto distinguished himself among the victorious defenders, capturing a richly laden Venetian vessel. After this he was sent a second time as ambassador to Rome, but he was received so ungraciously, and even threateningly, that he quickly returned, making his escape in disguise. For three years he was Governor of the province of Graffagnana, whither he was sent to quell serious disturbances.

He complains of ill usage by some of his patrons, the worst of whom was Cardinal Hippolito, one of the most infamous characters in Italian history. He was a third time offered the embassy to Rome, which he declined in a satiric epistle, in which he said: "I thank you that the desire is ever fresh with you to promote my interest and to change me from a plow-ox to a Barbary steed. You might command me with fire and sword to serve the Duke, not in Rome only, but in France, Spain or India; but if you would fain persuade me that honor and riches may be got in the way you propose, you must find a different bait to lure your bird into that net. As for honor, I have already as much as my heart could wish. It is enough for me that at home I can see more than half a dozen of my neighbors doff their caps when they meet me, because they know that I sometimes sit at table with the Duke and obtain a trifling favor which I seek for myself or for a friend. Then, if I have honor enough

to satisfy me, I should have abundance of wealth also; and my desires, which sometimes wander, would be at rest if I had just so much that I could live and be at liberty, without having to ask anything of anyone. More than this I never hope to attain." When his term of office was ended, he returned to Ferrara and once more devoted much of his time to the perfecting of his masterpiece. His dramas, which were written in early life, he re-wrote in later years, and several of them were acted with success. There is a significant anecdote in connection with them. His father had occasion to give him a severe reprimand, to which he listened without a word. Afterward, when he showed his brother that he had not been at fault, and the reprimand was undeserved, the brother asked why he had not made the explanation to their father. He answered: "Because I was so busily thinking how to make the best use of what my father said, in my new comedy, in which I have just such a scene of an old man scolding his boy, that I forgot the real incident." Ariosto wrote seven satires late in life, but because of their severity toward living persons, he did not dare to publish them. They appeared after his death, and much that is known of his life has been gathered from them. It is known that he had two sons, of whom he was very fond, and for whose welfare he did all that was possible; but whether he ever was married is uncertain. According to one writer he married late in life Alessandra, the mother of his sons. He was tall and strong, had a melodious voice, and was a remarkably fine reader. He died June 6, 1533, just after finishing the fourth edition of the *Orlando Furioso*. According to one account, his death was due to excitement and mortification produced by the burning of a fine theater that had been erected in Ferrara for the produc-

tion of his comedies. According to another, it was the result of indigestion brought on by his well known gormandizing habit. His portrait was painted by Titian. He was buried in the Church of the Benedictines, Ferrara, where was placed a marble bust with an iron crown of olive leaves. In a thunder-storm, more than two centuries later, a bolt of lightning entered the church and melted the crown. This incident gave Byron the subject for a stanza in *Childe Harold:*

> The lightning rent from Ariosto's bust
> The iron crown of laurel's mimic leaves;
> Nor was the ominous element unjust,
> For the true laurel wreath which Glory weaves
> Is of the tree no bolt of thunder cleaves,
> And the false semblance but disgraced his brow;
> Yet still, if fondly Superstition grieves,
> Know that the lightning sanctifies below
> Whate'er it strikes—yon head is doubly sacred now.

In the heart of Ferrara is a piazza named for Ariosto, and this is adorned by Vidoni's statue of him, on a lofty column. Any analysis or criticism of the *Orlando Furioso* is unnecessary here, in view of Flamini's, in the first volume of this series. All told, there are more than a hundred editions of the poem. The first English translation was made by Sir John Harrington, for Queen Elizabeth, and was very imperfect. The next was by William Huggins (1757), which also was lacking in fidelity, and a third by John Hoole (1783), which departs from the measure of the original and uses simply the English heroic couplet. The version used here is that of William Stewart Rose (1775-1843), who spent eight years upon it, rendered it, stanza for stanza, in the measure of the original, the *ottava rima,* and produced that which, by its fidelity and poetic character, is undoubtedly the definitive edition in our language. R. J.

CANTO I

OF loves and ladies, knights and arms, I sing,
Of courtesies, and many a daring feat;
And from those ancient days my story bring,
When Moors from Afric passed in hostile fleet,
And ravaged France, with Agramant their king,
Flushed with his youthful rage and furious heat,
Who on King Charles the Roman emperor's head
Had vowed due vengeance for Troyano dead.

In the same strain of Roland will I tell
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme,
On whom strange madness and rank fury fell,
A man esteemed so wise in former time;
If she, who to like cruel pass has well
Nigh brought my feeble wit which fain would climb
And hourly wastes my sense, concede me skill
And strength my daring promise to fulfil.

Roland, who long the lady of Catay,
Angelica, had loved, and with his brand
Raised countless trophies to that damsel gay,
In India, Median, and Tartarian land,
Westward with her had measured back his way;
Where, nigh the Pyrenees, with many a band
Of Germany and France, King Charlemagne
Had camped his faithful host upon the plain.

To make King Agramant, for penance, smite
His cheek, and rash Marsilius rue the hour;
This, when all trained with lance and sword to fight,
He led from Africa to swell his power;
That other when he pushed, in fell despite,
Against the realm of France Spain's martial flower.
'Twas thus Orlando came where Charles was tented
In evil hour, and soon the deed repented.

For here was seized his dame of peerless charms,
(How often human judgment wanders wide!)
Whom in long warfare he had kept from harms,
From western climes to eastern shores her guide
In his own land, 'mid friends and kindred arms,
Now without contest severed from his side.
Fearing the mischief kindled by her eyes,
From him the prudent Emperor reft the prize.

For bold Orlando and his cousin, free
  Rinaldo, late contended for the maid,
Enamored of that beauty rare; since she
  Alike the glowing breast of either swayed.
But Charles, who little liked such rivalry,
  And drew an omen thence of feebler aid,
To abate the cause of quarrel, seized the fair,
And placed her in Bavarian Namus' care,

Vowing with her the warrior to content,
  Who in that conflict, on that fatal day,
With his good hand most gainful succor lent,
  And slew most paynims in the martial fray.
But counter to his hopes the battle went,
  And his thinned squadrons fled in disarray;
Namus, with other Christian Captains taken,
And his pavilion in the rout forsaken.

There, lodged by Charles, that gentle bonnibel,
  Ordained to be the valiant victor's meed,
Before the event had sprung into her sell,
  And from the combat turned in time of need;
Presaging wisely Fortune would rebel
  That fatal day against the Christian creed:
And, entering a thick wood, discovered near,
In a close path, a horseless cavalier,

With shield upon his arm, in knightly wise,
  Belted and mailed, his helmet on his head;
The knight more lightly through the forest hies
  Than half-clothed churl to win the cloth of red.
But not from cruel snake more swiftly flies
  The timid shepherdess, with startled tread,
Than poor Angelica the bridle turns
When she the approaching knight on foot discerns.

This was that Paladin, good Aymon's seed,
  Who Mount Albano had in his command;
And late Bayardo lost his gallant steed,
  Escaped by strange adventure from his hand.
As soon as seen, the maid who rode at speed
  The warrior knew, and, while yet distant, scanned
The angelic features and the gentle air
Which long had held him fast in Cupid's snare.

The affrighted damsel turns her palfrey round,
  And shakes the floating bridle in the wind;
Nor in her panic seeks to choose her ground,
  Nor open grove prefers to thicket blind.
But reckless, pale and trembling, and astound,
  Leaves to her horse the devious ways to find.
He up and down the forest bore the dame,
Till to a sylvan river's bank he came.

Here stood the fierce Ferrau in grisly plight,
Begrimed with dust, and bathed with sweat and blood,
Who lately had withdrawn him from the fight,
To rest and drink at that refreshing flood:
But there had tarried in his own despite,
Since bending from the bank, in hasty mood,
He dropped his helmet in the crystal tide,
And vainly to regain the treasure tried.

Thither at speed she drives, and evermore
In her wild panic utters fearful cries;
And at the voice, upleaping on the shore,
The Saracen her lovely visage spies.
And, pale as is her cheek, and troubled sore,
Arriving, quickly to the warrior's eyes
(Though many days no news of her had shown)
The beautiful Angelica is known.

Courteous, and haply gifted with a breast
As warm as either of the cousins two,*
As bold, as if his brows in steel were dressed,
The succor that she sought he lent, and drew
His falchion, and against Rinaldo pressed,
Who saw with little fear the champion true.
Not only each to each was known by sight,
But each had proved in arms his foeman's might.

Thus, as they are, on foot the warriors vie
In cruel strife, and blade to blade oppose;
No marvel plate or brittle mail should fly,
When anvils had not stood the deafening blows.
It now behooves the palfrey swift to ply
His feet; for while the knights in combat close,
Him vexed to utmost speed, with goading spurs,
By waste or wood the frighted damsel stirs.

After the two had struggled long to throw
Each other in the strife, and vainly still;
Since neither valiant warrior was below
His opposite in force and knightly skill:
The first to parley with his Spanish foe
Was the good master of Albano's hill—
As one within whose raging breast was pent
A reckless fire, which struggled for a vent.

"Thou think'st," he said, "to injure me alone,
But know thou wilt thyself as much molest:
For if we fight because yon rising sun
This raging heat has kindled in my breast,
What were thy gain, and what the guerdon won,
Though I should yield my life, or stoop my crest;
If she shall never be thy glorious meed,
Who flies, while vainly we in battle bleed?

*Orlando and Rinaldo.

"Then how much better, since our stake's the same,
Thou, loving like myself, should'st mount and stay
To wait this battle's end, the lovely dame,
Before she fly yet further on her way.
The lady taken, we repeat our claim
With naked falchion to that peerless prey:
Else by long toil I see not what we gain
But simple loss and unrequited pain."

The peer's proposal pleased the paynim well,
And so their hot contention was foregone;
And such fair truce replaced that discord fell,
So mutual wrongs forgot and mischief done;
That for departure seated in his sell,
On foot the Spaniard left not Aymon's son;
But him to mount his courser's crupper prayed;
And both united chased the royal maid.

Oh, goodly truth in cavaliers of old!
Rivals they were, to different faith were bred.
Not yet the weary warriors' wounds were cold,
Still smarting from those strokes so fell and dread.
Yet they together ride by waste and wold,
And, unsuspecting, devious single thread.
Then, while four spurs infest his foaming sides,
Their courser brings to where the way divides.

And now the warlike pair at fault, for they
Knew not by which she might her palfrey goad—
Since both, without distinction, there survey
The recent print of hoofs on either road—
Commit the chase to fortune. By this way
The paynim pricked, by that Rinaldo strode.
But fierce Ferrau, bewildered in the wood,
Found himself once again where late he stood,

Beside the water, where he stooped to drink,
And dropped the knightly helmet—to his cost,
Sunk in the stream; and since he could not think
Her to retrieve who late his hopes had crossed,
He, where the treasure fell, descends to the brink
Of that swift stream, and seeks the morion lost.
But the casque lies so bedded in the sands,
'Twill ask no light endeavor at his hands.

A bough he severs from a neighboring tree,
And shreds and shapes the branch into a pole:
With this he sounds the stream, and anxiously
Fathoms, and rakes, and ransacks shelf and hole.
While angered sore at heart and restless, he
So lingered, where the troubled waters roll,
Breast high, from the mid river rose upright
The apparition of an angry knight.

Armed at all points he was, except his head,
And in his better hand a helmet bore;
The very casque that in the river's bed
Ferrau sought vainly, toiling long and sore,
Upon the Spanish knight he frowned, and said:
"Thou traitor to thy word, thou perjured Moor,
Why grieve the goodly helmet to resign,
Which, due to me long since, is justly mine?

"Remember, pagan, when thine arm laid low
The brother of Angelica. That knight
Am I, thy word was plighted then to throw
After my other arms this helmet bright.
If fortune now compel thee to forego
The prize, and do my will in thy despite,
Grieve not at this, but rather grieve that thou
Art found a perjured traitor to thy vow.

"But if thou seek'st a helmet, be thy task
To win and wear it more to thy renown.
A noble prize were good Orlando's casque;
Rinaldo's such, or still a fairer crown;
Almontes', or Mambrino's iron masque.
Make one of these, by force of arms, thine own.
And this good helm will fitly be bestowed
Where (such thy promise) it has long been owed."

Not having time his falsehood to excuse,
And knowing well how true the phantom's lore,
He spoke not; such remorse the words infuse.
Then by Lanfusa's life the warrior swore,
Never in fight or foray would he use
Helmet but that which good Orlando bore.
A different lot befel Rinaldo; who
Had chanced another pathway to pursue.

For far the warrior fared not, ere he spied,
Bounding across the path, his gallant steed,
And "Stay, Bayardo, mine," Rinaldo cried,
"Too cruel care the loss of thee does breed."
The horse for this returned not to his side,
Deaf to his prayer, but flew with better speed.
Furious, in chase of him, Rinaldo hies.
But follow we Angelica, who flies.

Behold! at hand a thicket she surveys
Gay with the flowering thorn and vermeil rose:
The tuft reflected in the stream that strays
Beside it, overshadowing oaks enclose.
Hollow within, and safe from vulgar gaze,
It seemed a place constructed for repose;
With boughs so interwoven that the light
Pierced not the tangled screen, far less the sight.

Within soft moss and herbage form a bed;
And to delay and rest the traveler woo.
'Twas there her limbs the weary damsel spread.
Her eyeballs bathed in slumber's balmy dew,
But little time had eased her drooping head,
Ere, as she weened, a courser's tramp she knew.
Softly she rises, and, the river near,
Armed cap-à-pie, beholds a cavalier.

"Thought that now makes me burn, now freeze with hate,
Which gnaws my heart and rankles at its root—
What's left to me," he said, "arrived too late,
While one more favored bears away the fruit?
Bare words and looks scarce cheered my hopeless state,
And the prime spoils reward another's suit.
Then since for me nor fruit nor blossom hangs,
Why should I longer pine in hopeless pangs?"

If any ask who made this sorrowing,
And pour'd into the stream so many tears,
I answer, it was fair Circassia's king,
That Sacripant, oppressed with amorous cares.
Love is the source from which his troubles spring,
The sole occasion of his pains and fears;
And he to her a lover's service paid,
Now well remembered by the royal maid.

He for her sake from Orient's farthest reign
Roved thither, where the sun descends to rest;
For he was told in India, to his pain,
That she Orlando followed to the west.
He after learned in France that Charlemagne,
Secluded from that champion and the rest,
As a fit guerdon, mewed her for the knight
Who should protect the lilies best in fight.

An apparition bright and unforeseen,
She stood like Venus or Diana fair,
In solemn pageant, issuing on the scene
From out of shadowy wood or murky lair.
And "Peace be with you!" cried the youthful queen,
"And God preserve my honor in his care,
Nor suffer that you blindly entertain
Opinion of my fame so false and vain."

He, full of fond and eager passion, pressed
Toward his Lady, his Divinity;
And she now clasped the warrior to her breast,
Who in Catay had haply been less free.
And now again the maid her thoughts addressed
Toward her native land and empery:
And feels, with hope revived, her bosom beat
Shortly to repossess her sumptuous seat.

Her chances all to him the damsel said,
Since he was eastward sent to Sericane
By her to seek the martial monarch's aid,
Who swayed the scepter of that fair domain;
And told how oft Orlando's friendly blade
Had saved her from dishonor, death, and pain;
And how she so preserved her virgin flower
Pure as it blossomed in her natal hour.

"If good Anglante's lord the prize forebore,
Nor seized the fair occasion when he might,
The loss be his, if Fortune never more
Him to enjoy so fair a prize invite.
To imitate that lord of little lore
I think not," said, apart, Circassia's knight,
"To quit such proffered good, and, to my shame,
Have but myself on after-thought to blame."

This said, he for a soft assault prepares,
When a loud noise within the greenwood shade
Beside him, rang in his astounded ears,
And sore against his will the monarch stayed.
He donned his helm (his other arms he wears),
Aye wont to rove in steel, with belted blade,
Replaced the bridle on his courser fleet,
Grappled his lance, and sprang into his seat.

With the bold semblance of a valiant knight,
Behold a warrior threads the forest hoar.
The stranger's mantle was of snowy white,
And white alike the waving plume he wore.
Balked of his bliss, and full of fell despite,
The monarch ill the interruption bore,
And spurred his horse to meet him in mid space,
With hate and fury glowing in his face.

Him he defies to fight, approaching nigh,
And weens to make him stoop his haughty crest:
The other knight, whose worth I rate as high,
His warlike prowess puts to present test;
Cuts short his haughty threats and angry cry,
And spurs, and lays his leveled lance in rest.
In tempest wheels Circassia's valiant peer,
And at his foeman's head each aims his spear.

Nor swerved the chargers from their destined course,
Who met like rams, and butted head to head.
The warlike Saracen's ill-fated horse,
Well valued while alive, dropt short and dead:
The stranger's, too, fell senseless; but perforce
Was roused by rowel from his grassy bed.
That of the paynim king, extended straight,
Lay on his battered lord with all his weight.

Upright upon his steed, the knight unknown,
Who at the encounter horse and rider threw,
Deeming enough was in the conflict done,
Cares not the worthless warfare to renew;
But endlong by the readiest path is gone,
And measures, pricking frith and forest through,
A mile, or little less, in furious heat,
Ere the foiled Saracen regains his feet.

The paynim groans, yet not for mischief sore
Endured in wounded arm or foot that bled;
But for mere shame, and never such before
Or after, dyed his cheek so deep a red,
And if he rued his fall, it grieved him more
His dame should lift him from his courser dead.
He speechless had remained, I ween, if she
Had not his prisoned tongue and voice set free.

The maiden seeks the Saracen to cheer,
When, lo! a messenger with pouch and horn,
On panting hackney!—man and horse appear,
With the long journey, weary and forlorn.
He questions Sacripant, approaching near,
Had he seen warrior pass, by whom were borne
A shield and crest of white; in search of whom
Through the wide forest pricked the weary groom.

King Sacripant made answer, "As you see,
He threw me here, and went but now his way.
Then tell the warrior's name, that I may be
Informed whose valor foiled me in the fray."
To him the groom: "That which you ask of me
I shall relate to you without delay."
Know that you were in combat prostrate laid
By the tried valor of a gentle maid.

"Bold is the maid; but fairer yet than bold,
Nor the redoubted virgin's name I veil:
'Twas Bradamant, that marred what praise of old
Your prowess ever won with sword and mail."
This said, he spurred again, his story told,
And left him little gladdened by the tale.
He recks not what he says or does, for shame,
And his flushed visage kindles into flame.

After the woeful warrior long had thought
Upon his cruel case, and still in vain,
And found a woman his defeat had wrought,
For thinking but increased the monarch's pain,
He climbed the other horse, nor spake he aught;
But silently uplifted from the plain,
Upon the croup bestowed that damsel sweet,
Reserved to gladder use in safer seat.

Two miles they have not gone before they hear
The sweeping woods that spread about them, sound
With such loud crash and trample, far and near,
The forest seemed to tremble all around;
And shortly after see a steed appear,
With housings wrought in gold and richly bound;
Who clears the bush and stream, with furious force,
And whatsoever else impedes his course.

"Unless the misty air," the damsel cries,
"And boughs deceive my sight, yon noble steed
Is, sure, Bayardo, who before us flies,
And parts the wood with such impetuous speed.
Yes, 'tis Bayardo's self I recognize.
How well the courser understands our need!
Two riders ill a foundered jade would bear,
But hither speeds the horse to end that care."

The bold Circassian lighted, and applied
His hand to seize him by the flowing rein.
He, swiftly turning, with his heels replied,
For he like lightning wheeled upon the plain.
Woe to the king, but that he leaps aside;
For should he smite, he would not lash in vain.
Such are his bone and sinew, that the shock
Of his good heels had split a solid rock.

Then to the maid he goes submissively,
With gentle blandishment and humble mood;
As the dog greets his lord with frolic glee,
Whom, some short season past, he had not viewed.
For good Bayardo had in memory
Albracca, where her hands prepared his food,
What time the damsel loved Rinaldo bold—
Rinaldo, then ungrateful, stern, and cold.

With her left hand she takes him by the bit,
And with the other pats his side and chest:
While the good steed, so marvelous his wit,
Lamb-like, obeyed the damsel and caressed.
Meantime the King, who sees the moment fit,
Leapt up, and with his knees the courser pressed.
While on the palfrey, eased of half his weight,
The lady left the croup, and gained the seat.

Then, as at hazard, she directs her sight,
Sounding in arms a man on foot espies,
And glows with sudden anger and despite;
For she in him the son of Aymon eyes.
Her more than life esteems the youthful knight,
While she from him, like crane from falcon, flies.
Time was the lady sighed, her passion slighted;
'Tis now Rinaldo loves, as ill requited.

Mixed with such secret bane the waters glide,
Which amorous care convert to sudden hate;
The maid no sooner had Rinaldo spied,
Than on her laughing eyes deep darkness sate:
And with sad mien and trembling voice she cried
To Sacripant, and prayed him not to wait
The near approach of the detested knight,
But through the wood with her pursue his flight.

CANTO II

Love to Rinaldo shows the damsel fair,
While he seems hideous to that gentle dame;
And he who, when the lady's pride and care,
Paid back with deepest hate her amorous flame,
Now pines, himself, the victim of despair,
Scorned in his turn, and his reward the same.
By the changed damsel in such sort abhorred,
She would choose death before that hated lord.

He to the pagan cries: "Forego thy theft,
And down, false felon, from that pilfer'd steed:
I am not wont to let my own be reft,
And he who seeks it dearly pays the deed.
More—I shall take from thee yon lovely weft;
To leave thee such a prize were foul misdeed;
And horse and maid, whose worth outstrips belief,
Were ill, methinks, relinquished to a thief."

"Thou liest," the haughty Saracen retorts,
As proud and burning with as fierce a flame—
"A thief thyself, if Fame the truth reports:
But let good deeds decide our dubious claim,
With whom the steed or damsel fair assorts—
Best proved by valiant deeds: though, for the dame,
That nothing is so precious, I with thee,
Search the wide world throughout, may well agree."

Thus kindling into wrath, the knights engage.
One is on foot, the other on his horse.
Small gain to this; for inexperienced page
Would better rein his charger in the course.
For such Bayardo's sense, he will not wage
War with his master, or put out his force.
For voice, nor hand, nor manage, will he stir,
Rebellious to the rein or goading spur.

As soon as Sacripant, with ill-timed leap,
Is from the fury of Bayardo freed,
You may believe the battle does not sleep
Between those champions, matched in heart and deed.
Their sounding blades such changeful measure keep,
The hammer-strokes of Vulcan with less speed
Descend in that dim cavern, where he heats,
And Jove's red thunders on his anvil beats.

Sometimes they lunge, then feign the thrust and parry,
Deep masters of the desperate game they play;
Or rise upon the furious stroke, and carry
Their swords aloft, or stoop and stand at bay.
Again they close, again exhausted tarry;
Now hide, now show themselves, and now give way,
And where one knight an inch of ground has granted,
His foeman's foot upon that inch is planted.

When, lo! Rinaldo, now impatient grown,
Strikes full at Sacripant with lifted blade;
And he puts forth his buckler made of bone,
And well with strong and stubborn steel inlaid:
Though passing thick, Fusberta cleaves it: groan
Greenwood, and covert close, and sunny glade,
The paynim's arm rings senseless with the blow,
And steel and bone, like ice, in shivers go.

When the fair damsel saw, with timid eye,
Such ruin follow from the falchion's sway,
She, like the criminal whose doom is nigh,
Changed her fair countenance through sore dismay,
And deemed that little time was left to fly
If she would not be that Rinaldo's prey—
Rinaldo scathed by her as much as he
Dotes on the scornful damsel miserably.

So turned her horse into the gloomy chase,
And drove him through rough path and tangled alley,
And oftentimes bent back her bloodless face,
And saw Rinaldo from each thicket sally.
Nor flying long had urged the frantic race,
Before she met a hermit in a valley.
Devotion in his aspect was expressed,
And his long beard descended on his breast.

The lady prayed that kindly friar, that he
Would straight conduct her to some haven near,
For that she from the land of France might flee,
And never more of loathed Rinaldo hear.
The hermit, who was skilled in sorcery,
Ceased not to soothe the gentle damsel's fear.
And with the promise of deliverance, shook
His pocket, and drew forth a secret book.

This opened, quick and mighty marvel wrought;
For not a leaf is finished by the sage,
Before a spirit, by his bidding brought,
Waits his command in likeness of a page:
He, by the magic writ constrained and taught,
Hastes where the warriors face to face engage,
In the cool shade—but not in cool disport—
And steps between, and stops their battle short.

"In courtesy," he cried, "let either show
What his foe's death to either can avail,
And what the guerdon conquest will bestow
On him who in the battle shall prevail.
If Roland, though he has not struck a blow,
Or snapt in fight a single link of mail,
To Paris-town conveys the damsel gay,
Who has engaged you in this bitter fray.

"Within an easy mile I saw the peer
Pricking to Paris with that lady bright;
Riding, in merry mood, with laugh and jeer,
And mocking at your fierce and fruitless fight.
Sure it were better, while they still are near,
To follow peer and damsel in their flight;
For should he once in Paris place his prize,
The lady never more would meet your eyes."

Rinaldo, passing where Bayardo stood,
Leaps on his back, and leaves, as swift as wind,
Without farewell, his rival in the wood;
Much less invites him to a seat behind.
The goaded charger, in his heat of blood,
Forces whate'er his eager course confined—
Ditch, river, tangled thorn, or marble block—
He swims the river, and he clears the rock.

And when Angelica, in random dread,
From the pavilion winged her rapid flight,
Bayardo marked the damsel as she fled,
His saddle lightened of Mount Alban's knight;
Who then on foot an equal combat sped,
Matched with a baron of no meaner might;
And chased the maid by woods, and floods, and strands,
In hopes to place her in the warrior's hands,

And, with desire to bring him to the maid,
Galloped before him still with rampant play;
But would not let his master mount, afraid
That he might make him take another way.
So luring on Rinaldo through the shade,
Twice brought him to his unexpected prey;
Twice foiled in his endeavor; once by bold
Ferrau; then Sacripant, as lately told.

At night Rinaldo rests his steed, with pain
To meet Anglante's lord he burned so sore;
And lent such credit to the tidings vain
Of the false courier of that wizard hoar:
And that day and the next, with flowing rein,
Rode, till the royal city rose before
His eyes; where Charlemange had taken post,
With the sad remnant of his broken host.

He, for he fears the Afric king's pursuit,
And sap and siege, upon his vassals calls
To gather in fresh victual, and recruit
And cleanse their ditches, and repair their walls.
And what may best annoy the foes, and suit
For safety, without more delay forestalls;
And plans an embassy to England, thence
To gather fresher forces for defense.

Rinaldo never executed thing
Less willingly, prevented in his quest
Of that fair vision he was following,
Whose charms his heart had ravished from his breast;
Yet, in obedience to the Christian king,
Prepared himself to do the royal hest.
To Calais the good envoy wends with speed,
And the same day embarks himself and steed.

And there, in scorn of cautious pilot's skill—
Such his impatience to regain his home—
Launched on the doubtful sea, which boded ill
And rolled its heavy billows, white with foam.
The wind, enraged that he opposed its will,
Stirred up the waves; and, 'mid the gathering gloom,
So the loud storm and tempest's fury grew
That topmast-high the flashing waters flew.

I speak of that famed damsel, by whose spear
O'erthrown, King Sacripant on earth was flung;
The worthy sister of the valiant peer,
From Beatrix and good Duke Aymon sprung.
By daring deeds and puissance no less dear
To Charlemange and France: since proved among
The first, her prowess, tried by many a test,
Equal to good Rinaldo's shone confessed.

A cavalier was suitor to the dame,
Who out of Afric passed with Agramant;
Rogero was his valiant father's name,
His mother was the child of Agolant.
And she, who not of bear or lion came,
Disdained not on the childe her love to plant,
Though cruel Fortune, ill their wishes meeting,
Had granted to the pair a single greeting.

Alone thenceforth she sought her lover (he
  Was named of him to whom he owed his birth),
And roved as safe as if in company
  Of thousands, trusting in her single worth.
She, having made the King of Circassy
  Salute the vision of old mother earth,
Traversed a wood, and that wood past, a mountain;
And stopt at length beside a lovely fountain.

Through a delicious mead the fountain-rill,
  By ancient trees o'ershaded, glides away;
And him whose ear its pleasing murmurs fill,
  Invites to drink, and on its banks to stay;
On the left side a cultivated hill
  Excludes the fervors of the middle day,
As first the damsel thither turns her eyes,
A youthful cavalier she seated spies—

A cavalier who underneath the shade
  Seems lost, as in a melancholy dream;
And on the bank, which gaudy flowers displayed,
  Reposing, overhangs the crystal stream.
His horse beneath a spreading beech is laid,
  And from a bough the shield and helmet gleam.
While his moist eyes and sad and downcast air
Speak him the broken victim of despair.

"Fair sir, a band of horse and foot," he said,
  "I brought to Charlemange; and thither pressed,
Where he an ambush for Marsilius spread,
  Descending from the Pyrenean crest;
And in my company a damsel led,
  Whose charms with fervid love had fired my breast,
When, as we journey by Rhône's current, I
A rider on a winged courser spy.

"The robber, whether he were man or shade,
  Or goblin damned to everlasting woe,
As soon as he beheld my dear-loved maid,
  Like falcon, who, descending, aims its blow,
Sank in a thought and rose; and soaring, laid
  Hands on his prize, and snatched her from below.
So quick the rape, that all appeared a dream,
Until I heard in air the damsel's scream.

"Six days I rode, from morn till setting sun,
  By horrid cliff, by bottom dark and drear;
And giddy precipice, where path was none,
  Nor sign, nor vestiges of man were near.
At last a dark and barren vale I won,
  Where caverned mountains and rude cliffs appear,
Where in the middle rose a rugged block,
With a fair castle planted on the rock.

"And while I lingered where those rocks aspire,
I saw a dwarf guide two of goodly strain,
Whose coming added hope to my desire
(Alas! desire and hope alike were vain)—
Both barons bold, and fearful in their ire;
The one Gradasso, King of Sericane,
The next, of youthful vigor, was a knight,
Prized in the Moorish court, Rogero hight.

"The dwarf exclaimed, 'These champions will assay
Their force with him who dwells on yonder steep,
And by such strange and unattempted way
Spurs the winged courser from his mountain-keep.'
And I to the approaching warriors say,
'Pity, fair sirs, the cruel loss I weep,
And, as I trust, yon daring spoiler slain,
Give my lost lady to my arms again.'

"Arrived beneath the craggy keep, the two
Contend which warrior shall begin the fight.
When, whether the first lot Gradasso drew,
Or young Rogero held the honor light,
The King of Sericane his bugle blew,
And the rock rang and fortress on the height;
And, lo! appareled for the fearful course,
The cavalier upon his winged horse!

"The wizard on Gradasso breaks his spear;
He wounds the empty air with fury vain.
This in the feathered monster breeds no fear,
Who to a distance shifts, and swoops again.
While that encounter made the Alfana rear,
Thrown back upon her haunches, on the plain.
The Alfana that the Indian monarch rode,
The fairest was that ever man bestrode.

"Up to the starry sphere with swift ascent
The wizard soars, then pounces from the sky,
And strikes the young Rogero, who, intent
Upon Gradasso, deems no danger nigh.
Beneath the wizard's blow the warrior bent,
Which made some deal his generous courser ply;
And when to smite the shifting foe he turned,
Him in the sky and out of reach discerned.

"Between the two on earth and him o' the sky,
Until that hour the warfare lasted there,
Which, spreading wide its veil of dusky dye
Throughout the world discolors all things fair.
What I beheld, I say; I add not, I,
A tittle to the tale; yet scarcely dare
To tell to other what I stood and saw;
So strange it seems, so passing Nature's law.

"Well covered in a goodly silken case,
He, the celestial warrior, bore his shield;
But why delayed the mantle to displace
I know not, and its lucid orb concealed.
Since this no sooner blazes in his face,
Than his foe tumbles dazzled on the field;
And while he, like a lifeless body, lies,
Becomes the necromancer's helpless prize.

"Like carbuncle, the magic buckler blazed,
No glare was ever seen that shone so bright:
Nor could the warriors choose but fall, amazed
And blinded by the clear and dazzling light.
I, too, that from a distant mountain gazed,
Fell senseless; and when I regained my sight,
After long time, saw neither knights nor page,
Nor aught besides a dark and empty stage.

"This while the fell enchanter, I supposed,
Dragged both the warriors to his prison-cell;
And by strange virtue of the shield disclosed,
I from my hope and they from freedom fell;
And thus I to the turrets, which enclosed
My heart, departing, bade a last farewell.
Now sum my griefs, and say if love combine
Other distress or grief to match with mine."

The knight relapsed into his first disease,
After his melancholy tale was done.
This was Count Pinabel, the Maganzese,
Anselmo d' Altaripa's faithless son.
He, where the blood ran foul through all degrees,
Disdained to be the only virtuous one;
Nor played a simple part among the base,
Passing in vice the villains of his race.

With aspect changing still, the beauteous dame
Hears what the mournful Maganzese narrates;
And, at first mention of Rogero's name,
Her radiant face with eager joy dilates.
But, full of pity, kindles into flame
As Pinabel his cruel durance states.
Nor finds she, though twice told, the story stale;
But makes him oft repeat and piece his tale.

And, after, when she deemed that all was clear,
Cried to the knight, "Repose upon my say.
To thee may my arrival well be dear,
And thou as fortunate account this day.
Straight wend me to the keep, sir cavalier,
Which holds a jewel of so rich a ray:
Nor shalt thou grudge thy labor and thy care,
If envious Fortune do but play me fair."

At once the cavalier remounts his horse,
And serves the gallant damsel as a guide;
Who is prepared Rogero's jail to force,
Or to be slain, or in his prison stied.
When lo! a messenger, in furious course,
Called to the dame to stay, and rode and cried.
This was the post who told Circassia's lord
What valiant hand had stretched him on the sward.

The courier, who so plied his restless heel,
News of Narbonne and of Montpelier bore;
How both had raised the standard of Castile,
All Acquamorta siding with the Moor;
And how Marseilles' disheartened men appeal
To her, who should protect her straightened shore,
And how, through him, her citizens demand
Counsel and comfort at their captain's hand.

Whether or not she should the call obey,
The youthful damsel doubts some little space;
Strong in one balance Fame and Duty weigh,
But softer thoughts both Fame and Duty chase:
And she, at length, resolved the emprize to assay,
And free Rogero from the enchanted place:
Or, should her valor in the adventure fail,
Would with the cherished lover share his jail.

Betwixt Maganza's and old Clermont's name
There was an ancient and a deadly feud:
And oft to blows the rival houses came,
And oft in civil blood their hands embrued.
And hence some treason to this gentle dame,
In his foul heart, the wicked county brewed;
Or, as the first occasion served, would stray
Out of the road, and leave her by the way.

And so the traitor's troubled fancy rack
Fear, doubt, and his own native rancorous mood,
That unawares he issued from the track,
And found himself within a gloomy wood:
Where a rough mountain reared its shaggy back,
Whose stony peak above the forest stood;
The daughter of Dordona's Duke* behind,
Dogging his footsteps through the thicket blind.

He, when he saw himself within the brake,
Thought to abandon his unweeting foe;
And to the dame, "'Twere better that we make
For shelter ere the gathering darkness grow;
And, yonder mountain past, save I mistake,
A tower is seated in the vale below.
Do you expect me then, while from the peak
I measure the remembered place I seek."

*Bradamant.

So said, he pushed his courser up the height
Of that lone mountain; in his evil mind
Revolving, as he went, some scheme or sleight
To rid him of the gentle dame behind.
When lo! a rocky cavern met his sight,
Amid those precipices dark and blind:
Its sides descended thirty yards and more,
Worked smooth, and at the bottom was a door.

A void was at the bottom, where a wide
Portal conducted to an inner room:
From thence a light shone out on every side,
As of a torch illumining the gloom.
Fair Bradamant pursued her faithless guide,
Suspended there, and pondering on her doom;
And came upon the felon where he stood,
Fearing lest she might lose him in the wood.

When her approach the County's first intent
Made vain, the wily traitor sought to mend
His toils, and some new stratagem invent
To rid her thence, or bring her to her end.
And so to meet the approaching lady went,
And showed the cave, and prayed her to ascend;
And said that in its bottom he had seen
A gentle damsel of bewitching mien,

Who, by her lovely semblance and rich vest,
Appeared a lady of no mean degree;
But melancholy, weeping, and distressed,
As one who pined there in captivity;
And that when he toward the entrance pressed
To learn who that unhappy maid might be,
One on the melancholy damsel flew,
And her within that inner cavern drew.

The beauteous Bradamant, who was more bold
Than wary, gave a ready ear; and, bent
To help the maid imprisoned in that hold,
Sought but the means to try the deep descent,
Then, looking round, descried an elm-tree old,
Which furnished present means for her intent;
And from the tree, with boughs and foliage stored,
Lopt a long branch, and shaped it with her sword.

The severed end she to the Count commended,
Then, grasping it, hung down that entrance steep,
With her feet foremost, by her arms suspended;
When, asking if she had the skill to leap,
The traitor, with a laugh, his hands extended,
And plunged his helpless prey into the deep.
"And thus," exclaimed the ruffian, "might I speed
"With thee each sucker of thy cursed seed!"

But not, as was the will of Pinabel,
Such cruel lot fair Bradamant assayed;
For striking on the bottom of the cell,
The stout elm-bough so long her weight upstayed,
That, though it split and splintered where it fell,
It broke her fall, and saved the gentle maid.
Some while astounded there the lady lay,
As the ensuing canto will display.

CANTO III

Leave we some time the wretch who, while he laid
Snares for another, wrought his proper doom;
And turn we to the damsel he betrayed,
Who had nigh found at once her death and tomb.
She, after rising from the rock, dismayed
At her shrewd fall, and gazing through the gloom,
Beheld and passed that inner door, which gave
Entrance to other and more spacious cave.

For the first cavern in a second ended,
Fashioned in form of church, and large and square;
With roof by cunning architect extended
On shafts of alabaster rich and rare.
The flame of a clear-burning lamp ascended
Before the central altar; and the glare,
Illuminating all the space about,
Shone through the gate, and lit the cave without.

Touched with the sanctifying thoughts that wait
On worthy spirit in a holy place,
She prays with eager lips, and heart elate,
To the Disposer of all earthly grace,
And, kneeling, hears a secret wicket grate
In the opposing wall, whence, face to face,
A woman issuing forth the maid addresses,
Barefoot, ungirt, and with disheveled tresses.

"O generous Bradamant," the matron cried,
"Know thine arrival in this hallowed hold
Was not unauthorized of heavenly guide;
And the prophetic ghost of Merlin told
Thou to this cave shouldst come by path untried,
Which covers the renowned magician's mould.
And here have I long time awaited thee,
To tell what is the heavens' pronounced decree.

"This is the ancient memorable cave
Which Merlin, that enchanter sage, did make:
Thou may'st have heard how that magician brave
Was cheated by the Lady of the Lake.
Below, beneath the cavern, is the grave
That holds his bones; where, for that lady's sake,
His limbs (for such her will) the wizard spread,
Living he laid him there, and lies there dead.

"Still lives the spirit of immortal strain;
Lodged in the enchanter's corpse, till to the skies
The trumpet call it, or to endless pain,
As it with dove or raven's wing shall rise.
Still lives the voice, and thou shalt hear how plain
From its sepulchral case of marble cries:
Since this has still the past and future taught
To every wight that has its counsel sought.

"Long days have passed since I from distant land
My course did to this cemetery steer.
That in the solemn mysteries I scanned,
Merlin to me the truth should better clear;
And having compassed the design I planned,
A month beyond, for thee, have tarried here;
Since Merlin, still with certain knowledge summing
Events, prefixed this moment for thy coming."

She full of joy the adventure strange pursues,
Moving with ready haste behind the dame,
Who brings her to the sepulcher that mews
The bones and spirit erst of Merlin's name.
The tomb, of hardest stone that masons use,
Shone smooth and lucid, and as red as flame.
So that although no sunbeam pierced the gloom,
Its splendor lit the subterraneous room.

Scarcely had Bradamant above the sill
Lifted her foot, and trod the secret cave,
When the live spirit, in clear tones that thrill,
Addressed the martial virgin from the grave;
"May Fortune, chaste and noble maid, fulfil
Thine every wish!" exclaimed the wizard brave,
"Since from thy womb a princely race shall spring,
Whose name through Italy and earth shall ring.

"Then, that the will of Heaven be duly brought
To a fair end through thee, in fitting date,
Which from the first to bless thy love has wrought,
And destined young Rogero for thy mate,
Let nothing interpose to break that thought,
But boldly tread the path prescribed by fate;
Nor let aught stay thee till the thief be thrown
By thy good lance, who keeps thee from thine own."

Into the church Melissa called the maid,
Where she had drawn a magic ring, as wide
As might contain the damsel, prostrate laid;
With the full measure of a palm beside.
And on her head, lest spirit should invade,
A pentacle for more assurance tied.
So bade her hold her peace, and stand and look,
Then read, and schooled the demons from her book.

Lo! forth of that first cave what countless swarm
Presses upon the circle's sacred round,
But when it would the magic rampart storm,
Finds the way barred as if by fosse or mound;
Then back the rabble turns of various form;
And when it thrice with bending march has wound
About the circle, troops into the cave,
Where stands that beauteous urn, the wizard's grave.

"To tell at large the puissant acts and worth,
And name of each who, figured in a sprite,
Is present to our eyes before his birth,"
Said sage Melissa to the damsel bright;
"To tell the deeds which they shall act on earth,
Were labor not to finish with the night.
Hence I shall call few worthies of thy line,
As time and fair occasion shall combine.

"Soon as to-morrow's sun shall gild the skies
With his first light, myself the way will show
To where the wizard knight Rogero sties;
And built with polished steel the ramparts glow;
So long as through deep woods thy journey lies,
Till, at the sea arrived, I shall bestow
Such new instructions for the future way,
That thou no more shalt need Melissa's stay."

Next day they gain a glen, which heights inclose,
And mountains inaccessible to man:
And they all day toil on, without repose,
Where precipices frowned and torrents ran.
And (what may some diversion interpose)
Sweet subjects of discourse together scan,
In conference, which best might make appear
The rugged road less dismal and severe.

Of these the greater portion served to guide
(Such the wise woman's scope) the warlike dame;
And teach by what device might be untied
Rogero's gyves, if steadfast were her flame.
"If thou wert Mars himself, or Pallas," cried
The sage Melissa; "though with thee there came
More than King Charles or Agramant command,
Against the wizard foe thou could'st not stand.

"Besides that it is walled about with steel,
And inexpugnable his tower, and high;
Besides that his swift horse is taught to wheel,
And caracole and gallop in mid sky,
He bears a mortal shield of power to seal,
As soon as 'tis exposed, the dazzled eye;
And so invades each sense the splendor shed,
That he who sees the blaze remains as dead.

"And lest to shut thine eyes thou should'st suppose
Might serve, contending with the wizard knight;
How would'st thou know, when both in combat close,
When he strikes home, or when eschews the fight?
But to escape the blaze that blinds his foes,
And render vain each necromantic sleight,
Have here a speedy mean which cannot miss;
Nor can the world afford a way but this.

"King Agramant of Africa a ring,
Thieved from an Indian queen by subtle guiles,
Has to a baron of his following
Consigned, who now precedes us by few miles;
Brunello he. Who wears the gift shall bring
To nought all sorceries and magic wiles.
In thefts and cheats Brunello is as well
Instructed as the sage in charm and spell.

"Brunello, he so practised and so sly
As now I tell thee, by his king is sent,
That he with aid of mother wit may try,
And of this ring, well proved in like event,
To take Rogero from the castle high,
So has he boasted, by the wizard pent,
And to his lord such promise did impart,
Who has Rogero's presence most at heart.

"That his escape to thee alone may owe,
Not to the King, the youthful cavalier,
How to release Rogero from his foe
And his enchanted cage, prepare to hear.
Three days along the shingle shalt thou go,
Beside the sea, whose waves will soon appear,
Thee the third day shall to a hostel bring,
Where he shall come who bears the virtuous ring,

"That thou may'st recognize the man, in height
Less than six palms, observe one at this inn
Of black and curly hair the dwarfish wight!
Beard overgrown about the cheek and chin;
With shaggy brow, swoln eyes, and cloudy sight,
A nose close flattened, and a sallow skin;
To this, that I may make my sketch complete,
Succinctly clad, like courier, goes the cheat.

"Thy conversation with this man shall turn
Upon enchantment, spell, and mystic pact;
And thou shalt, in thy talk, appear to yearn
To prove the wizard's strength, as is the fact.
But, lady, let him not thy knowledge learn
Of his good ring, which mars all magic act.
He shall propose to bring thee as a guide
To the tall castle, whither thou would'st ride.

"Follow him close, and viewing (for a sign),
Now, near the fortress of the enchanter hoar;
Let no false pity there thy mind incline
To stay the execution of my lore.
Give him his death; but let him not divine
Thy thought, nor grant him respite; for before
Thine eyes, concealed by it, the caitiff slips
If once he place the ring between his lips."

Discoursing thus, they came upon the sea
Where Garonne near fair Bordeaux meets the tide;
Here, fellow travelers no more to be,
Some natural tears they drop and then divide.
Duke Aymon's child, who slumbers not till she
Release her knight, holds on till even-tide:
'Twas then the damsel at a hostel rested,
Where Sir Brunello was already guested.

Bradamant feigns with that deceitful scout;
(Fitting with him the father of all lies)
Watches his thievish hands in fear and doubt;
And follows every motion with her eyes.
When lo! a mighty noise is heard without!
"O mighty mother! King of heaven!" she cries.
"What thing is this I hear?" and quickly springs
Toward the place from whence the larum rings,

And sees the host and all his family,
Where, one to door, and one to window slips,
With eyes upturned and gazing at the sky,
As if to witness comet or eclipse.
And there the lady views, with wondering eye,
What she had scarce believed from other's lips—
A feathered courser, sailing through the rack,
Who bore an arméd knight upon his back.

Broad were his pinions, and of various hue;
Seated between, a knight the saddle pressed,
Clad in steel arms, which wide their radiance threw,
His wondrous course directed to the west:
There dropt among the mountains lost to view.
And this was, as that host informed his guest,
(And true the tale) a sorcerer, who made
Now farther, now more near, his frequent raid.

"He, sometimes towering, soars into the skies;
Then seems, descending, but to skim the ground;
And of all beauteous women makes a prize,
Who, to their mischief, in these parts are found.
Hence, whether in their own or others' eyes
Esteemed as fair, the wretched damsels round
(And all in fact the felon plunders) hide;
As fearing of the sun to be descried.

"A castle on the Pyrenean height
The necromancer keeps, the work of spell,"
The host relates, "of steel, so fair and bright,
All nature cannot match the wondrous shell.
There many cavaliers, to prove their might,
Have gone, but none returned the tale to tell.
So that I doubt, fair sir, the thief enthralls
Or slays whoever in the encounter falls."

The watchful maid attends to everything,
Glad at her heart, and trusting to complete
(What she shall compass by the virtuous ring)
The downfall of the enchanter and his seat.
Then to the host: ."A guide I pray thee bring,
Who better knows than I the thief's retreat.
So burns my heart, nor can I choose but go,
To strive in battle with this wizard foe."

"It shall not need," exclaimed the dwarfish Moor,
"For I myself will serve you as a guide;
Who have the road set down, with other lore,
So that you shall rejoice with me to ride."
He meant the ring, but further hint forbore;
Lest dearly he the avowal should abide.
And she to him: ."Your guidance gives me pleasure."
Meaning by this she hoped to win his treasure.

A rock from that deep valley's center springs;
Bright walls of steel about its summit go;
And this as high that airy summit flings,
As it leaves all the neighboring cliffs below.
He may not scale the height who has not wings,
And vainly would each painful toil bestow.
"Lo! where his prisoners," Sir Brunello cries,
"Ladies and cavaliers, the enchanter sties."

Scarped smooth upon four parts, the mountain bare
Seems fashioned with the plumb, by builder's skill;
Nor upon any side was path or stair,
Which furnished man the means to climb the hill.
The castle seemed the very nest and lair
Of animal supplied with plume and quill.
And here the damsel knows 'tis time to slay
The wily dwarf, and take the ring away.

But deems it foul with blood of man to stain
  Unarmed and of so base a sort, her brand;
For well, without his death, she may obtain
  The costly ring; and so suspends her hand.
Brunello, off his guard, with little pain,
  She seized, and strongly bound with girding band;
Then to a lofty fir made fast the string;
But from his finger first withdrew the ring.

Neither by tears, nor groans, nor sound of woe,
  To move the steadfast maid the dwarf had power:
She down the rugged hill descended slow,
  Until she reached the plain beneath the tower.
Then gave her bugle breath, the keep below,
  To call the castled wizard to the stour;
And when the sound was finished, threatening cried,
And called him to the combat and defied.

On his left arm alone his shield he took,
  Covered all o'er with silk of crimson hue;
In his right hand he held an open book,
  Whence, as the enchanter read, strange wonder grew:
For oftentimes, to sight, the lance he shook;
  And flinching eyelids could not bide the view;
With tuck or mace he seemed to smite the foe:
But sate aloof and had not struck a blow.

No empty fiction wrought by magic lore,
  But natural was the steed the wizard pressed:
For him a filly to a griffin bore
  Hight hippogryph. In wings and beak and crest,
Formed like his sire, as in the feet before;
  But like the mare, his dam, in all the rest.
Such on Riphæan hills, though rarely found,
Are bred, beyond the frozen ocean's bound.

When she sometime had fought upon her horse,
  She from the courser on her feet descends,
To compass and more freely put in force,
  As by the enchantress schooled, her wily ends.
The wizard, to display his last resource,
  Unweeting the defense, toward her wends.
He bares the shield, secure to blind his foe,
And by the magic light, astonished, throw.

To cat and mouse, in battles fought before,
  I liken the magician and his foes;
But the comparison holds good no more;
  For, with the ring, the maid against him goes,
Firm and attentive still, and watching sore,
  Lest upon her the wizard should impose;
And as she sees him bare the wondrous shield,
Closes her eyes and falls upon the field.

Not that the shining metal could offend,
As wont these others, from its cover freed;
But so the damsel did, to make descend
The vain enchanter from his wondrous steed;
Nor was in aught defeated of her end,
For she no sooner on the grassy mead
Had laid her head than, wheeling widely round,
The flying courser pitched upon the ground.

Already cased again, the shield was hung
By the magician at his saddle bow.
He lights and seeks her, who, like wolf among
The bushes, couched in thicket, waits the roe;
She without more delay from ambush sprung
As he drew near, and grappled fast the foe.
That wretched man the volume by whose aid
He all his battles fought on earth had laid,

And ran to bind her with a chain, which he
Girt round about him for such purpose, wore;
Because he deemed she was no less to be
Mastered and bound than those subdued before.
Him hath the dame already flung; by me
Excused with reason if he strove not more.
For fearful were the odds between that bold
And puissant maid, and warrior weak and old!

Intending to behead the fallen foe,
She lifts her conquering hand; but in mid space,
When she beholds his visage, stops the blow,
As if disdaining a revenge so base.
She sees in him her prowess has laid low
A venerable sire with sorrowing face;
Whose hair and wrinkles speak him, to her guess,
Of six score years and ten, or little less.

"Kill me, for love of God!" Afflicted sore,
The old enchanter full of wrath did cry.
But the victorious damsel still was more
Averse to kill than he was bent to die.
To know who was the necromancer hoar
The gentle lady had desire, and why
The tower he in that savage place designed,
Doing such outrage foul to all mankind.

"Nor I, by malice moved, alas! poor wight,"
The weeping necromancer answer made,
"Built the fair castle on the rocky height,
Nor yet for rapine ply the robber's trade;
But only to redeem a gentle knight
From danger sore and death, by love was swayed;
Who, as the skies foreshow, in little season,
Is doomd to die a Christian, and by treason.

"The sun beholds not 'twixt the poles a childe
So excellent as he, and passing fair;
Who, from his infancy, Rogero styled
(Atlantes I), was tutored by my care.
By love of fame and evil stars beguiled,
He follows into France Troyano's heir.
Him, in my eyes than son esteemed more dear,
I seek to snatch from France and peril near.

"Save they should seek to break their dungeon's bound
I grant my inmates every other pleasure.
For whatsoever in the world is found,
Search its four quarters, in this keep I treasure;
Whatever heart can wish or tongue can sound
Cates, brave attire, game, sport, or mirthful measure.
My field well sown, I well had reaped my grain,
But that thy coming makes my labor vain.

"Ah! then unless thy heart less beauteous be
Than thy sweet face, mar not my pious care;
Take my steel buckler, this I give to thee,
And take that horse, which flies so fast in air,
Nor meddle with my castle more; or free
One or two captive friends, the rest forbear—
Or (for I crave but this) release them all,
So that Rogero but remain my thrall.

"Or, if disposed to take him from my sight,
Before the youth be into France conveyed,
Be pleased to free my miserable sprite
From its now rotted bark, long since decayed."
"Prate as thou wilt, I shall restore the knight
To liberty," replied the martial maid,
"Nor offer shield and courser to resign,
Which are not in thy gift—already mine."

Bound by the conqueror with the chain he bore
Atlantes walked, the damsel following nigh,
Who trusted not to the magician hoar,
Although he seemed subdued in port and eye.
Nor many paces went the pair, before
They at the mountain's foot the cleft espy,
With steps by which the rugged hill to round;
And climb, till to the castle-gate they wound.

Atlantes from the threshold, graved by skill,
With characters and wondrous signs, upturned
A virtuous stone, where, underneath the sill,
Pots, with perpetual fire and secret, burned.
The enchanter breaks them; and at once the hill
To an inhospitable rock is turned.
Nor wall nor tower on any side is seen,
As if no castle there had ever been.

Then from the lady's toils the wizard clears
His limbs, as thrush escapes the fowler's snare;
With him as well his castle disappears,
And leaves the prisoned troop in open air;
From their gay lodgings, dames and cavaliers,
Unhoused upon that desert, bleak and bare.
And many at the freedom felt annoy,
Which dispossessed them of such life of joy.

Now that Rogero sees her here, and knows
Alone she freed him from the wizard's nest,
He deems, his bosom with such joy overflows,
That he is singly fortunate and blest.
Thither, where late the damsel conquered, goes
The band, descending from the mountain's crest;
And finds the hippogryph, who bore the shield,
But in its case of crimson silk concealed.

Now the bold youth from his Frontino flings
(Frontino was his gentle courser hight)
Then leaps on him who towers in air, and stings
And goads his haughty heart with rowels bright.
He runs a short career; then upward springs,
And through mid ether soars a fairer flight
Than hawk from which the falconer plucks away
In time the blinding hood, and points her prey.

After the hippogryph has won such height,
That he is lessened to a point, he bends
His course for where the sun, with sinking light,
When he goes round the heavenly Crab, descends;
And shoots through air, like well-greased bark and light,
Which through the sea a wind propitious sends.
Him leave we on his way, who well shall speed,
And turn we to Rinaldo in his need.

Day after day the good Rinaldo fares,
Forced by the wind, the spacious ocean through;
Now westward borne, and now toward the Bears;
For night and day the ceaseless tempest blew.
Scotland at last her dusky coast uprears,
And gives the Caledonian wood to view,
Which, through its shadowy groves of ancient oak,
Oft echoes to the champion's sturdy stroke.

Without a guide or company he went
Through that wide forest; choosing now this way,
Now that, now other, as it might present
Hope of adventurous quest or hard assay:
And, ere the first day's circling sun is spent,
The peer is guested in an abbey gray:
Which spends much wealth in harboring those who claim
Its shelter, warlike knight or wandering dame.

The monks and abbot to Mount Alban's peer
A goodly welcome in their house accord;
Who asked, but not before with savory cheer
He amply had his wearied strength restored,
If in that tract, by errant cavalier,
Often adventurous quest might be explored,
In which a man might prove, by dangerous deed,
If blame or glory were his fitting meed.

They answered, in those woods he might be sure
Many and strange adventures would be found;
But deeds there wrought were, like the place, obscure,
And, for the greater part, not bruited round.
"Then seek," they said, "a worthier quest, secure
Your works will not be buried underground,
So that the glorious act achieved, as due,
Fame may your peril and your pain pursue.

"And if you would your warlike worth assay,
Prepare the worthiest enterprise to hear
That e'er in times of old or present day
Was undertaken by a cavalier.
Our monarch's daughter needs some friendly stay,
Now sore bested, against a puissant peer.
Lurcanio is the doughty baron's name,
Who would bereave her both of life and fame.

"Her he before her father does pursue,
Perchance yet more for hatred than for right;
And vouches, to a gallery she updrew
A lover, seen by him, at dead of night.
Hence death by fire will be the damsel's due—
Such is our law—unless some champion fight
In her behalf, and, ere a month go by
(Nigh spent) upon the accuser prove the lie.

"The King, sore grieving for Genevra bright,
For such is his unhappy daughter's name,
Proclaims by town and city that the knight
Who shall deliver her from death and shame,
He to the royal damsel will unite,
With dower well suited to a royal dame;
So that the valiant warrior who has stood
In her defense be come of gentle blood."

When the new dawn, with streaks of red and white,
Broke in the east, and cleared the hemisphere,
Ronaldo took his steed and armor bright:
A squire that abbey furnished to the peer.
With him, for many leagues and miles, the knight
Pricked through the dismal forest dark and drear;
While they toward the Scottish city ride,
Where the poor damsel's cause is to be tried.

Seeking their way to shorten as they wound,
They to the wider track a path preferred;
When echoing through the gloomy forest round,
Loud lamentations nigh the road were heard.
Toward a neighboring vale, whence came the sound,
This his Bayardo, that his hackney spurred;
And viewed, between two grisly ruffians there,
A girl who seemed at distance passing fair.

But woe-begone and weeping was the maid
As ever damsel, dame or wight was seen;
Hard by the barbarous twain prepared the blade
To deluge with that damsel's blood the green.
She to delay her death awhile essayed,
Until she pity moved with mournful mien.
This when Rinaldo near approaching eyes,
He thither drives with threats and furious cries.

The ruffians turn their backs and take to flight
As soon as they the distant succor view.
And squat within a valley out of sight:
Nor cares the good Rinaldo to pursue.
To her approaching, sues Mount Alban's knight,
To say what on her head such evil drew;
And, to save time, commands his squire to stoop,
And take the damsel on his horse's croup.

CANTO IV

"The King," she said. "proclaims by town and tower
(For he believes her wronged), his child to free,
For he shall have to wife, with ample dower,
Who saves the royal maid from infamy.
But each to the other looks, and to this hour
No champion yet, 'tis said, appears: for he,
Lurcanio, is esteemed so fierce in fight,
It seems as he were feared of every knight.

"And evil Fate has willed her brother dear,
Zerbino, is not here the foe to face;
Since many months has roved the cavalier,
Proving his matchless worth with spear and mace;
For if the valiant champion were more near
(Such is his courage), or in any place
Whither in time the news might be conveyed,
He would not fail to bear his sister aid.

"The King, meantime. who would the quest pursue,
And by more certain proof than combat, try
If the accuser's tale be false or true,
And she deserve, or merit not, to die,
Arrests some ladies of her retinue,
That, as he weens, the fact can verify.
Whence I foresaw, that if I taken were,
Too certain risk I with Lurcanio share.

"That very night I from the palace flee,
And to the Duke repair, escaped from court;
And, were I taken, make him plainly see
How much it either's safety would import.
He praised, and bade me of good courage be,
And, for his comfort, prayed me to resort
To a strong castle which he held hard by;
And gave me two to bear me company.

"But this perfidious, foul, ungrateful man,
At length suspicious of my faith and zeal,
And apprehending that his wily plan,
In course of time, I haply might reveal,
Feigned that meanwhile the monarch's anger ran
Too high, he would withdraw me, and conceal
Within a fortress of his own, where I
(Such was his real end) was doomed to die.

"For secretly the Duke enjoined the guide,
Who with me through the gloomy forest went,
The worthy guerdon of a faith so tried,
To slay me; and had compassed his intent,
But for your ready succor, when I cried.
Behold! what wages love's poor slaves content."
Thus to Rinaldo did Dalinda say,
As they together still pursued their way.

And for St. Andrew's town, with eager speed,
Where was the King with all his family,
And where the single fight, in listed mead,
Upon his daughter's quarrel, was to be,
The good Rinaldo pricked nor spared his steed,
Until, within an easy distance, he
Now near the city, met a squire who brought
More recent tidings than the damsel taught:

That thither had repaired a stranger knight,
To combat with Genevra's quarrel bent,
With ensigns strange, not known of living wight,
Since ever close concealed the warrior went;
Nor, since he had been there, had bared to sight
His visage, aye within his helmet pent:
And that the very squire who with him came,
Swore that he knew not what the stranger's name.

Not far they ride before the walls appear,
And now before the gate their coursers stand.
To advance the sad Dalinda was in fear,
Yet followed, trusting in Rinaldo's brand.
The gate was shut, and to the porter near,
What this implied Rinaldo made demand:
To him was said, the people one and all,
Were trooped to see a fight without the wall:

Beyond the city, fought upon accord,
Between Lurcanio and a stranger knight,
Where, on a spacious meadow's level sward,
The pair already had begun the fight.
The porter opened to Mount Alban's lord.
And straight behind the peer the portal hight.
Rinaldo through the empty city rode,
But in a hostel first the dame bestowed:

And wills that she (he will not long delay
To seek her there) till his return repose;
And quickly to the lists pursues his way,
Where the two made that fell exchange of blows,
And strove and struggled yet in bloody fray.
Lurcanio's heart with vengeful hatred glows
Against Genevra; while that other knight
As well maintains the quarrel for her right.

Six knights on foot within the palisade
Stand covered with the corslet's iron case;
Beneath the Duke of Albany arrayed,
Borne on a puissant steed of noble race:
Who there, as lord high-constable obeyed,
Was keeper of the field and of the place,
And joyed Genevra's peril to espy
With swelling bosom and exulting eye.

Rinaldo pierces through the parted swarm
(So wide is felt the good Bayardo's sway),
And he who hears the courser come in storm,
Halts not, in his desire to make him way:
Above is seen Rinaldo's lofty form,
The flower of those who mix in martial fray;
He stops his horse before the monarch's chair,
While all to hear the paladin repair.

"Dread sir," to him the good Rinaldo said,
"Let not the pair this combat longer ply;
Since whichsoever of the two falls dead,
Know, that you let him perish wrongfully:
This thinks that he is right, and is misled,
Vouches the false, and knows not 'tis a lie:
Since that which brought his brother to his end,
Moves him in causeless battle to contend.

"*That*, in pure gentleness, with little care
If what he here maintains be wrong or right,
Because he would preserve a maid so fair,
Perils his person in the furious fight.
To injured innocence I safety bear,
And to the evil man its opposite.
But first, for love of God, the battle stay;
Then list, sir King, to what I shall display."

So moved the King the grave authority
Of one who seemed so worthy, by his cheer,
That he made sign the battle should not be
Further continued then with sword or spear:
To whom, together with his chivalry,
And barons of the realm and others near
Rinaldo all the treacherous plot displayed,
Which Polinesso for Genevra laid.

Next that he there in arms would testify
The truth of what he vouched, the warrior cried.
False Polinesso, called, with troubled eye,
Stood forth, but daringly the tale denied.
To him the good Rinaldo in reply:
"By deeds be now the doubtful quarrel tried."
The field was cleared, and, ready armed, the foes,
Without more let, in deadly duel close.

False Polinesso, with a mien distressed,
A pallid cheek, and heart which thickly beat,
At the third trumpet, laid his lance in rest;
As well Rinaldo spurred the knight to meet,
And leveled at his evil foeman's breast,
Eager to finish at a single heat.
Nor counter to his wish was the event;
Since through the warrior half his weapon went.

Him, through his breast, impaled upon the spear,
More than six yards beyond his horse he bore.
With speed alighted Mount Albano's peer,
And, ere he rose, unlaced the helm he wore:
But he for mercy prayed with humble cheer,
Unfit to strive in joust or warfare more:
And, before King and court, with faltering breath,
Confessed the fraud which brought him to his death.

Ariodantes, whom with tearful eye
His brother and Genevra wept as dead,
And King, and people, and nobility:
Such light his goodness and his valor shed.
The pilgrim therefore might appear to lie
In what he of the missing warrior said.
Yet was it true that from a headland, he
Had seen him plunge into the foaming sea.

But, as it oft befalls despairing wight,
Who grisly Death desires till he appear;
But loathes what he had sought, on nearer sight:
So painful seems the cruel pass and drear.
Thus, in the sea engulfed, the wretched knight,
Repentant of his deed, was touched with fear;
And, matchless both for spirit and for hand,
Beat back the billows, and returned to land.

And now despising, as of folly bred,
The fond desire which did to death impel,
Thence, soaked and dripping wet, his way did tread,
And halted at a hermit's humble cell:
And housed within the holy father's shed,
There secretly awhile designed to dwell;
Till to his ears by rumor should be voiced,
If his Genevra sorrowed or rejoiced.

At first he heard that, through excess of woe,
The miserable damsel well-nigh died:
For so abroad the doleful tidings go,
'Twas talked of in the island, far and wide:
Far other proof than that deceitful show,
Which to his cruel grief he thought he spied;
And next against the fair Genevra heard
Lurcanio to her sire his charge preferred.

Nor for his brother felt less enmity
Than was the love he lately bore the maid;
For he too foul, and full of cruelty,
Esteemed the deed, although for him essayed;
And, hearing after, in her jeopardy,
That none appeared to lend the damsel aid,
Because so puissant was Lurcanio's might,
All dreaded an encounter with the knight.

"Alas!" he said, "I cannot bear to see
Thus by my cause the royal damsel die;
My death too bitter and too dread would be,
Did I, before my own. her death descry:
For still my lady, my divinity
She is—the light and comfort of my eye.
Her, right or wrong, I cannot choose but shield,
And for her safety perish in the field."

The issue of the event was told above;
How prince and people Ariodantes knew.
Nor less delight the Scottish king did prove
Than when the knight the accuser overthrew:
Within himself he thought that never love
In man was shown so constant and so true;
Who, though so foully wronged, prepared to stake
His life against his brother's for her sake;

And yielding to his natural inclination,
And at the suit of all his court beside,
And mostly at Rinaldo's instigation,
Assigned the youth the damsel as his bride.
Albany's duchy, now in sequestration,
Late Polinesso's, who in duel died,
Could not be forfeited in happier hour;
Since this the monarch made his daughter's dower.

Rinaldo for Dalinda mercy won;
Who from her fault's due punishment went free.
She, satiate of the world, (and this to shun,
The damsel so had vowed) to God will flee:
And hence, in Denmark's land, to live a nun,
Straight from her native Scotland sailed the sea.
But it is time Rogero to pursue,
Who on his courser posts the welkin through.

Although Rogero is of constant mind,
Nor from his cheek the wonted hues depart,
I ween that faster than a leaf i' the wind
Fluttered within his breast the stripling's heart.
All Europe's region he had left behind
In his swift course; and, issuing in that part,
Passed by a mighty space the southern sound
Where great Alcides fixed the sailor's bound.

When the huge bird his pinions long had plied,
In a straight line, without one stoop or bend,
He, tired of air, with sweeping wheel and wide,
Began upon an island to descend;
Like that fair region, whither, long unspied
Of him, her wayward mood did long offend,
Whilom in vain, through strange and secret sluice,
Passed under sea the virgin Arethuse.

When the hyppogriph above the island hung,
And had approached so nigh that landscape fair,
That, if his rider from the saddle sprung,
He might the leap with little danger dare,
Rogero lit the grass and flowers among,
But held him lest he should remount the air;
And to a myrtle, nigh the rolling brine,
Made fast, between a bay-tree and a pine.

And there, close by where rose a bubbling fount,
Begirt with fertile palm and cedar-tree,
He drops the shield, the helmet from his front
Uplifts, and, either hand from gauntlet free,
Now turning to the beach, and now the mount,
Catches the gales which blow from hill or sea,
And, with a joyous murmur, lightly stir
The lofty top of beech, or feathery fir.

When he drew nigh the city-walls, so bright
The world has not their equal, he the straight
And spacious way deserts, the way which dight
Across the plain, conducted to the gate;
And by that safer road upon the right,
Strains now against the mountain; but, in wait,
Encounters soon the crowd of evil foes,
Who furiously the childe's advance oppose.

This gallops on a horse without a bit;
This backs the sluggish ass or bullock slow;
These mounted on the croup of centaur sit;
Those perched on eagle, crane, or estridge go—
Some male, some female, some hermaphrodit;
These drain the cup, and those the bugle blow.
One bore a corded ladder, one a hook,
One a dull file or bar of iron shook.

Of her I speak before the royal pair,
Who many days pursued her search in vain;
By shadowy wood, or over champaign bare,
By farm and city, and by hill and plain;
But seeks her cherished friend with fruitless care,
Divided by such space of land and main:
Often she goes among the paynim spears,
Yet never aught of her Rogero hears.

At length to find the wondrous cave she thought,
Where the prophetic bones of Merlin lie,
And there lament herself until she wrought
Upon the pitying marble to reply;
For thence, if yet he lived would she be taught,
Or this glad life to hard necessity
Had yielded up; and, when she was possessed
Of the seer's counsels, would pursue the best.

With this intention, Bradamant her way
Directed thither, where in Poictier's wood
The vocal tomb, containing Merlin's clay,
Concealed in Alpine place and savage, stood.
But that enchantress sage who night and day
Thought of the damsel, watchful for her good,
She, I repeat, who taught her what should be
In that fair grotto her posterity;

She who preserved her with protecting care,
That same enchantress, still benign and wise,
Who, knowing she a matchless race should bear
Of men, or rather semi-deities,
Spies daily what her thoughts and actions are,
And lots for her each day, divining, tries;
She all Rogero's fortune knew, how freed;
Then borne to India by the griffin-steed.

She, not like old Atlantes, rendered blind
By the great love she to the stripling bore,
Set not on gifting him with life her mind,
As was the scope of that enchanter hoar;
Who, reckless all of fame and praise declined,
Wished length of days to his Rogero more
Than that, to win a world's applause, the peer
Should of his joyous life forego one year.

By him he to Alcina's isle had been
Despatched, that in her palace he might dwell,
Forgetting arms; and, as enchanter seen
In magic and the use of every spell,
The heart had fastened of that fairy-queen,
Enamored of the gentle youth, so well,
That she the knot would never disengage,
Though he should live to more than Nestor's age.

Returning now to her that well foreknew
Whatever was to come to pass, I say
She thither did her journey straight pursue,
Where she met Aymon's daughter by the way
Forlorn and wandering: Bradamant at view
Of her enchantress, erst to grief a prey,
Changes it all to hope: the other tells
That with Alcina her Rogero dwells.

"Since thou, an antidote to sorcery,
Lady," she said, "the virtuous ring dost wear,
I have no doubt if to yon island I
This, where thine every good is hidden, bear,
To foil Alcina's wiles and witchery,
And thence to bring thee back thy cherished care.
This evening early will I hence away,
And be in India by the break of day."

Giving the ring, her cause she recommends
To her, and recommends Rogero more.
Countless salutes by her the damsel sends,
Then of Provence, departing, seeks the shore.
The enchantress to another quarter wends;
And, for the execution of her lore,
Conjures, that eve, a palfrey, by her art,
With one foot red, black every other part.

Some Farfarello, or Alchino he,
I think, whom in that form she raised from hell;
And with loose hair, disheveled horribly,
Ungirt and barefoot, mounted in the sell.
But, with wise caution, from her finger she
Withdrew the ring, lest it should mar the spell;
And then by him was with such swiftness borne,
She in Alcina's isle arrived at morn.

Herself she changed with wonderful disguise,
Adding a palm of stature to her height;
And made her limbs of a proportioned size;
And of the very measure seemed to sight,
As was, she deemed, the necromancer wise
Who with such care had reared the youthful knight.
With long-descending beard she clothed her chin,
And wrinkled o'er her front and other skin.

To imitate his speech, and face, and cheer,
She knew so well, that, by the youth descried,
She might the sage Atlantes' self appear;
Next hid, and watched so long, that she espied
Upon a day (rare chance) the cavalier
At length detached from his Alcina's side:
For still, in motion or at rest, the fay
Ill bore the youth should be an hour away.

Alone she finds him, fitting well her will,
As he enjoys the pure and morning air
Beside a brook, which trickled from a hill,
Streaming toward a limpid lake and fair.
His fine, soft garments, wove with cunning skill,
All over, ease and wantonness declare;
These with her hand, such subtle toil well taught,
For him in silk and gold Alcina wrought.

About the stripling's neck a splendid string
Of gems, descending to mid-breast, is wound;
On each once manly arm, now glittering
With the bright hoop, a bracelet fair is bound.
Pierced with a golden wire, in form of ring,
Is either ear; and from the yellow round
Depend two precious pearls; not such the coast
Of Araby or sumptuous India boast.

Crisped into comely ringlets was his hair,
Wet with the costliest odors and the best;
And soft and amorous all his gestures were,
Like one who does Valentian lady's best.
In him, besides his name, was nothing fair,
And more than half corrupted all the rest.
So was Rogero found, within that dell,
Changed from his former self by potent spell

Him in the figure of Atlantes sage
She fronts, who bore the enchanter's borrowed cheer;
With that grave face, and reverend with age,
Which he was always wonted to revere;
And with that eye, which in his pupilage,
Beaming with wrath, he whilom so did fear.
And sternly cries, "Is this the fruit at last
"Which pays my tedious pain and labor past?

"The marrow of the lion and the bear
Didst thou for this thine early banquet make,
And, trained by me, by cliff or cavern-lair,
Strangle with infant hands the crested snake;
Their claws from tiger and from panther tear,
And tusks from living boar in tangled brake,
That, bred in such a school, in thee should I
Alcina's Atys or Adonis spy?

"Forbid not of the noblest souls the birth,
Formed in the ideas of the eternal mind,
Destined, from age to age, to visit earth,
Sprung from thy stock, and clothed in corporal rind;
The spring of thousand palms and festal mirth,
Through which, to Italy with losses pined
And wounds, thy good descendants shall restore
The fame and honors she enjoyed of yore.

"Say, what has she thou makest thy fancy's queen
More than what other courtezans possess?
Who of so many concubine has been;
How used her lovers in the end to bless,
Thou truly know'st; but that she may be seen
Without disguise, and in her real dress,
This ring, returning, on thy finger wear,
And thou shalt see the dame, and mark how fair."

Abashed and mute, Rogero listening,
In vain to her reproof an answer sought;
Who on his little finger put the ring,
Whose virtue to himself the warrior brought,
And such remorse and shame within him spring,
When on his altered sense the change is wrought,
A thousand fathoms deep he fain would lie
Buried in earth, unseen of any eye.

So speaking, to the natural shape she wore
Before his eyes returned the magic dame;
Nor old Atlantes' form was needed more,
The good effect obtained for which she came.
To tell you that which was not told before,
Melissa was the sage enchantress' name:
Who to Rogero now her purpose said,
And told with what design she thither sped:

Despatched by her, who him in anxious pain
Desires, nor longer can without him be,
With the intent to loose him from the chain
Wherewith he was begirt with sorcery;
And had put on, more credence to obtain,
Atlantes de Carena's form; but she,
Seeing his health restored, now willed the youth,
Through her should hear and see the very truth.

"That gentle lady who so loves thee, who
Were well deserving love upon thy part;
To whom (unless forgot, thou know'st how true
The tale) thou debtor for thy freedom art,
This ring, which can each magic spell undo,
Sends for thy succor, and would send her heart
If, with such virtue fraught, her heart could bring
Thee safety in thy perils, like the ring."

Like boy who somewhere his ripe fruit bestows,
And next forgets the place where it is laid,
Then, after many days, conducted goes
By chance where he rich deposit made.
And wonders that the hidden treasure shows,
Not what it was, but rotten and decayed;
And hates, and scorns, and loathes with altered eyes,
And throws away what he was used to prize—

Rogero thus, when, by Melissa's lore
Advised he to behold the fay returned,
And that good ring of sovereign virtue wore,
Which, on the finger placed, all spells o'erturned;
For that fair damsel he had left before,
To his surprise, so foul a dame discerned.
That in this ample world, examined round,
A hag so old and hideous is not found.

But, as Melissa counseled him, he wore
His wonted semblance for a time, till he
Was with his armor, many days before
Laid by, again accoutered cap-à-pie,
And, lest Alcina should his end explore,
Feigned to make proof of his agility;
Feigned to make proof if for his arms he were
Too gross, long time unwont the mail to bear.

Next Belisarda to his flank he tied
(For so Rogero's trenchant sword was hight),
And took the wondrous buckler, which, espied,
Not only dazzled the beholder's sight,
But seemed, when its silk veil was drawn aside,
As from the body it exhaled the sprite:
In its close cover of red sendal hung,
This at his neck the youthful warrior slung.

Provided thus, he to the stables came,
And bade with bridle and with saddle dight
A horse more black than pitch; for so the dame
Counseled, well-taught how swift the steed and light.
Him Rabicano those who know him name,
And he the courser was, that with the knight
Who stands beside the sea, the breeze's sport,
The whale of yore conducted to that port.

Assaulting suddenly the guardian crew,
He, sword in hand, the squadron set upon;
This one he wounded, and that other slew,
And, point by point made good, the drawbridge won;
And ere of his escape Alcina knew,
The gentle youth was far away and gone.
My next shall tell his route, and how he gained
At last the realm where Logistilla reigned.

CANTO V

Rogero, still dissembling, as I said,
Armed, to the gate on Rabican did ride;
Found the guard unprepared, nor let his blade,
Amid that crowd, hang idle at his side.
He passed the bridge, and broke the palisade,
Some slain, some maimed; then t'ward the forest hied;
But on that road small space had measured yet,
When he a servant of the fairy met.

Toward him came the knave, with semblance haught,
Demanding whither in such haste he sped.
To him the good Rogero answers naught.
He hence assured more clearly that he fled,
Within himself to stop the warrior thought,
And thus, with his left arm extended, said:
"What if I suddenly thy purpose balk,
And thou find no defense against this hawk?"

Then flies his bird, which works so well his wing,
Rabican cannot distance him in his flight.
The falconer from his back to ground did spring,
And freed him from the bit that held him tight,
Who seemed an arrow parted from the string,
And terrible to foe, with kick and bite;
While with such haste behind the servant came,
He sped as moved by wind, or rather flame.

Nor will the falconer's dog appear more slow;
But hunts Rogero's courser, as in chase
Of timid hare the pard is wont to go.
Not to stand fast the warrior deems disgrace,
And turns toward the swiftly-footed foe,
Whom he sees wield a riding-wand, in place
Of other arms, to make his dog obey.
Rogero scorns his falchion to display.

The servant made at him and smote him sore;
The dog his left foot worried; while untied
From rein, the lightened horse three times and more
Lashed from the croup, nor missed his better side.
The hawk, oft wheeling, with her talons tore
The stripling, and his horse so terrified,
The courser, by the whizzing sound dismayed,
Little the guiding hand or spur obeyed.

Constrained at length, his sword Rogero drew
To clear the rabble, who his course delay;
And in the animal's or villain's view
Did now its point, and now its edge display.
But with more hindrance the vexatious crew
Swarm here and there, and wholly block the way;
And that dishonor will ensue and loss,
Rogero sees, if him they longer cross.

He knew each little that he longer stayed
Would bring the fay and followers on the trail;
Already drums were beat, and trumpets brayed,
And larum-bells rang loud in every vale.
An act too foul it seemed to use his blade
On dog, and knave unfenced with arms or mail;
A better and a shorter way it were
The buckler, old Atlantes' work, to bare.

He raised the crimson cloth in which he wore
The wondrous shield, enclosed for many a day;
Its beams, as proved a thousand times before,
Work as they wont, when on the sight they play;
Senseless the falconer tumbles on the moor;
Drop dog and hackney; drop the pinions gay,
Which poised in air the bird no longer keep:
Then glad Rogero leaves, a prey to sleep.

In the mean time, Alcina, who had heard
How he had forced the gate, and, in the press,
Slaughtered a mighty number of her guard,
Remained nigh dead, o'erwhelmed with her distress:
She tore her vesture, and her visage marred,
And cursed her want of wit and wariness.
Then made forthwith her mieny sound to arms,
And round herself arrayed her martial swarms.

Divided next, one squadron by the way
Rogero took she sent; the bands were two:
She at the port embarked the next array,
And straight to sea dispatched the warlike crew.
With this good squadron went the desperate fay,
And darked by loosened sails the billows grew,
For so desire upon her bosom preyed,
Of troops she left her city unpurveyed.

Without a guard she left her palace there,
Which to Melissa, prompt her time to seize,
To loose her vassals that in misery were,
Afforded all convenience and full ease;
To range, at leisure, through the palace fair,
And so examine all her witcheries;
To raze the seal, burn images, and loose,
Or cancel hag-knot, rhomb, or magic noose.

Thence through the fields, fast hurrying from that dome,
The former lovers changed a mighty train,
Some into rock or tree, to fountain some,
Or beast, she made assume their shapes again:
And these, when they anew are free to roam,
Follow Rogero's footsteps to the reign
Of Logistilla sage; and from that bourn
To Scythia, Persia, Greece and Ind return.

They to their several homes, despatched, repair,
Bound by a debt that never can be paid.
The English duke, above the rest her care,
Of these, was first in human form arrayed;
For much his kindred and the courteous prayer
Of good Rogero with Melissa weighed.
Besides his prayers, the ring Rogero gave;
That him she by its aid might better save.

Meantime, through rugged rocks and shagged with thorn,
Rogero wends to seek the sober fay
From cliff to cliff, from path to path forlorn,
A rugged, lone, inhospitable way;
Till he, with labor huge oppressed and worn,
Issued at noon upon a beach, that lay
'Twixt sea and mountain, open to the south,
Deserted, barren, bare, and parched with drouth.

The heat and thirst and labor that he bore
By that drear sandy way beside the sea,
Along the unhabited and sunny shore,
Were to Rogero grievous company.
But for I may not still pursue this lore,
Nor should you busied with one matter be,
Rogero I abandon in this heat,
For Scotland; to pursue Rinaldo's beat.

By King, by daughter, and by all degrees,
To Sir Rinaldo was large welcome paid;
And next the warrior, at his better ease,
The occasion of his embassy displayed:
That he from thence and England and subsidies
Of men was seeking, for his monarch's aid,
In Charles's name; and added, in his care,
The justest reasons to support his prayer.

The King made answer, that without delay,
Taxed to the utmost of his power and might,
His means at Charlemagne's disposal lay,
For the honor of the empire and the right.
And that, within few days, he in array
Such horsemen as he had in arms would dight;
And, save that he was now waxed old, would lead
The expedition he was prayed to speed.

Nor like consideration would appear
Worthy to stop him, but that he possessed
A son, and for such charge that cavalier,
Measured by wit and force, was worthiest.
Though not within the kingdom was the peer,
It was his hope (as he assured his guest)
He would, while yet preparing was the band,
Return, and find it mustered to his hand.

So sent through all his realm, with expedition,
His treasurers, to levy men and steeds;
And ships prepared, and warlike ammunition,
And money, stores and victual for their needs.
Meantime the good Rinaldo on his mission,
Leaving the courteous king, to England speeds,
He brought him on his way to Berwick's town,
And was observed to weep when he was gone.

The wind sat in the poop; Rinaldo good
Embarked, and bade farewell to all; the sheet
Still loosening to the breeze, the skipper stood,
Till where Thames' waters, waxing bitter, meet
Salt ocean; wafted thence by tide of flood,
Through a sure channel to fair London's seat,
Safely the mariners their course explore,
Making their way, with aid of sail and oar.

The Emperor Charles, and he, King Otho grave,
Who was with Charles by siege in Paris pressed,
A broad commission to Rinaldo brave,
With letters to the Prince of Wales addressed,
And countersigns had given, despatched to crave
What foot and horse were by the land possessed.
The whole to be to Calais port conveyed;
That it to France and Charles might furnish aid.

The Prince I speak of, who on Otho's throne
Sate in his stead, the vacant helm to guide,
Such honor did to Aymon's valiant son,
He not with such his King had gratified.
Next, all to good Rinaldo's wish was done:
Since for his martial bands on every side,
In Britain, or the isles which round her lay,
To assemble near the sea he fixed a day.

After Angelica had shaped her course
By the great sea that laves the Gascon shore,
Still keeping to the rippling waves her horse,
Where best the moistened sand the palfrey bore,
Him, plunged into the brine, the fiend perforce
Dragged, till he swam amid the watery roar.
Nor what to do the timid damsel knew,
Save that she closer to her saddle grew.

She cannot, howsoe'er the rein she ply,
Govern the horse, which swims the surge to meet.
Her raiment she collects and holds it high;
And, not to wet them, gathers up her feet.
Her tresses, which the breeze still wantonly
Assaults, disheveled on her shoulders beat.
The louder winds are hushed, perchance in duty,
Intent, like ocean, on such sovereign beauty.

Landward in vain her eyes the damsel bright
Directs, which water face and breast with tears,
And ever sees, decreasing to her sight,
The beach she left, which less and less appears.
The courser, which was swimming to the right,
After a mighty sweep, the lady bears
To shore, where rock and cavern shag the brink,
As night upon the land begins to sink.

"Fortune, what more remains, that thou on me
Shouldst not now satiate thy revengeful thirst?
What more," she said, "can I bestow on thee
Than, what thou seekest not, this life accurst?
Thou wast in haste to snatch me from the sea,
Where I had ended its sad days, immersed;
Because to torture me with further ill
Before I die, is yet thy cruel will.

"But what worse torment still remains in store
Beyond, I am unable to descry;
By thee from my fair throne, which nevermore
I hope to repossess, compelled to fly;
I, what is worse, my honor lost deplore;
For if I sinned not in effect, yet I
Give matter by my wanderings to be stung
For wantonness of every carping tongue."

From the extremest height the hermit hoar
Of that high rock above her had surveyed
Angelica, arrived upon the shore,
Beneath the cliff, afflicted and dismayed.
He to that place had come six days before;
For him by path untrod had fiend conveyed.
And he approached her, feigning such a call
As e'er Hilarion might have had, or Paul.

When him, yet unagnized, she saw appear,
The lady took some comfort, and laid by,
Emboldened by degrees, her former fear;
Though still her visage was of death-like dye.
"*Misericord!* father," when the friar was near,
She said, "for brought to evil pass am I."
And told, still broke by sobs, in doleful tone,
The story, to her hearer not unknown.

It here behooves me, from the path I pressed,
To turn awhile, ere I this case relate:
In the great northern sea, toward the west,
Green Ireland past, an isle is situate.
Ebuda is its name, whose shores infest,
Its people wasted through the godhead's hate,
The hideous orc, and Proteus' other herd,
By him against that race in vengeance stirred.

And, girding them on every side, the rout
Will often siege to walled cities lay;
Where in long weariness and fearful doubt,
The townsmen kept their watch by night and day,
The fields they have abandoned all about,
And for a remedy, their last assay,
To the oracle, demanding counsel, fly,
Which to the supplicants' prayer made this reply:

That it behooved them find a damsel, who
A form as beauteous as his loved one wore,
To be to Proteus offered up, in lieu
Of his fair lady, slain upon the shore:
He, if he deems her an atonement due,
Will keep the damsel, nor disturb them more:
If not; another they must still present,
And so, till they the deity content.

This while round Paris-walls the leaguer lay
Of famed Troyano's son's besieging band,
Reduced to such extremity one day,
That it nigh fell into the foeman's hand;
And, but that vows had virtue to allay
The wrath of Heaven, whose waters drenched the land,
That day had perished by the Moorish lance
The holy empire and great name of France.

To memory now returned that lady gay,
Who ne'er was banished from Orlando's breast;
And fanned the secret fire, which through the day,
Now kindled into flame, had seemed at rest;
That in his escort even from Catay
Of farthest Ind, had journeyed to the west;
There lost: Of whom he had discerned no token
Since Charles's power near Bordeaux-town was broken.

To good Orlando it appeared as he,
Mid odorous flowers, upon a grassy bed,
Were gazing on that beauteous ivory,
Which Love's own hand had tinged with native red;
And those two stars of pure transparency,
With which he in Love's toils his fancy fed;
Of those bright eyes, and that bright face, I say,
Which from his breast had torn his heart away.

Meanwhile the unhappy lover lost the dame
In that dim air, nor how he lost her, weets;
And, roving far and near, her beauteous name
Through every sounding wood and plain repeats.
And while "Oh, wretched me!" is his exclaim,
"Who has to poison changed my promised sweets?"
He of his sovereign lady who with tears
Demands his aid, the lamentation hears.

Thither, whence comes the sound, he swiftly hies,
And toils, now here, now there, with labor sore,
Oh! what tormenting grief, to think his eyes
Cannot again the lovely rays explore!
Lo! other voice from other quarter cries:
"Hope not on earth to enjoy the blessing more."
At that alarming cry he woke, and found
Himself in tears of bitter sorrow drowned.

Not thinking that like images are vain,
When fear, or when desire disturbs our rest,
The thought of her, exposed to shame and pain,
In such a mode upon his fancy pressed,
He, thundering, leaped from bed, and with what chain
And plate behooved, his limbs all over dressed:
Took Brigliadoro from the stall he filled,
Nor any squire attendant's service willed.

Nor would Orlando's faithful Brandimart,
Who loved him as himself, behind him stay;
Whether to bring him back he in his heart
Hoped, or of him ill brooked injurious say:
And scarce, in his impatience to depart,
Till fall of eve his sally would delay.
Lest she should hinder his design, of this
He nought imparted to his Flordelis.

She when she has expected him in vain
Well nigh a month, and nought of him discerns,
Sallies without a guide or faithful train,
So with desire of him her bosom yearns;
And many a country seeks for him in vain;
To whom the story in due place returns.
No more I now shall tell you of these two,
More bent Anglantes' champion to pursue;

Who having old Almontes' blazonry
So changed, drew nigh the gate; and there the peer
Approached a captain of the guard, when he
"I am the County," whispered in his ear;
And (the bridge quickly lowered, and passage free
At his commandment) by the way most near
Went straight toward the foe: but what befel
Him next, the canto that ensues shall tell.

CANTO VI.

Orlando I excuse, rejoiced to know
I have like partner in my vice; for still
To seek my good I too am faint and slow,
But sound and nimble in pursuit of ill.
The Count departs, disguised in sable show,
Nor for so many friends, with forward will,
Deserted cares; and comes where on the plain
Are camped the hosts of Afric and of Spain;

Rather uncamped; for, in less troops or more,
Rains under shed and tree had driven the band.
Here ten, there twenty, seven or eight, or four,
Nearer or farther off, Orlando scanned.
Each sleeps, oppressed with toil and wearied sore;
This stretched on earth, that propped upon his hand:
They sleep, and many might the Count have slain,
Yet never bared his puissant Durindane.

So generous is Orlando's heart, he base
Esteems it were to smite a sleeping foe.
Now this he seeks, and now that other place,
Yet cannot track his lady, high or low.
If he finds any one in waking case,
Sighing, to him he paints her form and show;
Then prays him that for courtesy he where
The damsel is will teach him to repair.

Between October and November's moon,
In that dull season when the leafy vest
Is stript from trembling plant, whose limbs are shown
Of all their mantling foliage dispossest,
And in close flight the swarming birds are flown,
Orlando enters on his amorous quest;
Nor quits when gladsome spring returns anew.
This he pursues the livelong winter through,

As (such his wont) from land to land he goes,
A river's side he reaches on a day;
Which to the neighboring sea in quiet flows,
Bretons and Normans parting on its way;
But, swoln with mountain rain and melted snows,
Then thundered, white with foam and flashing spray,
And with impetuous stream had overtopt
Its brim, and burst the bridge, and passage stopt.

The paladin this bank and the other eyed,
Along the river's channel, to explore,
Since neither fish nor fowl, if from his side
He could gain footing on the adverse shore;
When, with a damsel in the poop, he spied
A ready pinnace that toward him bore.
She steered as if she would approach the strand,
But would not let her shallop make the land.

Steered not to land; as haply with suspicion
To take a lading, in her own despite.
To her the good Orlando made petition.
To put him o'er the stream; and she: "No knight
Passes this ferry, but upon condition
He shall his faith and promise duly plight,
That he will do a battle, at my prayer,
Upon the justest quarrel and most fair.

"So that if thou on the other shore to land
Dost by my aid, Sir cavalier, desire,
Promise me, ere the month which is at hand,"
The damsel so pursued her speech, "expire,
That thou wilt join the Hibernian monarch's band
Who forms a fair armada, in his ire,
To sack Ebuda's isle; of all comprest
By ocean's circling waves, the cruellest.

"Know, beyond Ireland, in the briny flood,
An island, amid many others, lies;
Ebuda is its name; whose people rude
(Such is their law), in search of plunder hies;
And all the women that it takes, for food
To a voracious animal supplies;
Which every day to chore for this does speed,
And finds new wife or maid whereon to feed.

"For of these merchant still and Corsair sell
A large supply, and most of those most fair.
Reckoning one slain a-day, you thus may well
Compute what wives and maids have perished there.
But if compassion in your bosom dwell,
Nor you to Love an utter rebel are,
Be you contented with this band to wend,
United for such profitable end."

To hear the whole Orlando scarce could bear,
  Ere to be first in that emprize he swore,
As one who evil deed misliked to hear,
  And with impatience like relation bore;
Hence first induced to think, and next to fear,
  Angelica is captive on that shore;
Since he so long the missing maid pursues,
Nor of the damsel yet can gather news.

Breaking his every scheme, this phantasy
  The troubled cavalier did so confound,
That with all speed to that fell island he,
  Resolved to navigate; nor yet the round
Of a new sun was buried in the sea,
  Ere he a vessel at St. Malo's found;
In which, embarking on his quest, the Count
Put forth, and cleared that night St. Michael's Mount.

A distance traversed in four days, in one
  Backward the ceaseless wind the frigate bore;
The helmsman kept the sea, lest she should run
  Aground, and break like glass upon the shore.
The wind upon the fifth day changed its tune,
  So loud and furious through the other four;
And let, without more strife, the vessel gain
A port, where Antwerp's river met the main.

As soon as harbored there in shattered plight,
  The weary mariners their frigate moor,
Out of a city, seated on the right
  Of that fair stream, descends upon the shore,
As his gray hairs may warrant him, a wight
  Stricken in years, who, full of courteous lore,
Turns to the County, after greetings due,
Reputing him the leader of that crew.

And prays him, on a damsel's part, that he
  To her would think not irksome to repair,
Whom of unequaled affability
  And sweetness, he would find, as well as fair;
Or otherwise would be content that she
  Should to his bark resort, to seek him there,
Nor prove less pliant than had been before
All the knights errant that had sought that shore.

For hitherto, by land or sea conveyed,
  No cavalier had journeyed to that place
That had refused to parley with the maid,
  And give her counsel in a cruel case.
Orlando, hearing this, no more delayed,
  But issued from the bark with hurried pace,
And, in all kind and courteous usage bred,
His way directed where the ancient led.

With him did Roland to the city go,
And at the bottom of a palace-stair,
Conducted by that elder, full of woe
A lady found, if face may grief declare,
And sable cloth, with which (a mournful show)
Chamber, and hall, and gallery furnished were;
Who, after honorable welcome paid,
Seated the paladin, and sadly said:

"The daughter of the Count of Holland," cried
The lady, "know in me, Sir cavalier.
Though not his only offspring (for beside
Myself two brothers were) to him so dear
That, for whatever favor I applied,
I never met refusal from the peer.
I living gladly in this happy sort,
A duke by chance was guested at our court.

"The Duke of Zealand, meaning for Biscay,
With purpose there to war upon the Moor;
His youth and beauty, then in manhood's May,
And force of love, unfelt by me before,
Made me, with little strife, his easy prey:
Persuaded by his outward cheer yet more,
I thought, and think, and still shall think, the peer
Loved me, and loves me yet with heart sincere.

"Those days, when as the wind was contrary
(Which fair for me, if foul for others blew),
To others forty seemed, an hour to me;
So upon speedy wings the moments flew.
This while, we oftentimes held colloquy,
When to be given with solemn rite and due,
I promised him, and he to me, his hand,
On his return, in wedlock's holy band.

"Bireno hardly from our court was gone,
For such the name my faithful lover bore,
When Friesland's king, whose realm is from our own
No farther than this stream from Ocean's shore,
Designing to bestow me on his son,
Arbantes hight (the monarch had no more),
To Holland sent the worthiest of his land,
Me of the Count, my father, to demand.

"I without power to falsify that vow
Which to my gentle lover I had plight;
Nor if I had the power, would Love allow
Me so to play the ingrate, if I might,
(The treaty, well on foot, to overthrow,
And nigh concluded) with afflicted sprite,
Cried to my father, I would rather shed
My very life-blood, than in Friesland wed.

"My gracious father, he who took but pleasure
In what pleased me, nor would my will constrain,
Marking my grief, broke off the intended measure,
To give me comfort and relieve my pain.
At this proud Friesland's sovereign such displeasure
Conceived, and entertained such high disdain,
He entered Holland, and the war began,
In which my kin were slaughtered to a man.

"And I remaining, sire and brethren dead,
The isle of Holland's only heir, the King
Of Friesland, who by the desire was led
Of better there his power establishing,
To me, and also to my people said,
I peace and quiet to my state might bring,
Would I (what I before would not accord)
Now take his son Arbantes for my lord.

"I, not so much for deadly hate I bear
To him and all his kindred, by whose spite
My sire and both my brothers slaughtered were,
My country sacked and waste, as that the knight
I would not wrong, to whom I fealty sware,
And had my solemn word already plight
That me to wedlock man should woo in vain,
Till he to Holland should return from Spain,

"For one ill-born, a hundred yet behind,
Will bear (replied) to hazard all content,
Slain, burned alive, to let them to the wind
Scatter my ashes, rather than consent.
My people seek to move my steadfast mind,
By prayer and by protest, from this intent;
And threat to yield my city up and me,
Lest all be lost through my obduracy.

"When in my fixed and firm resolve they read,
That prayer and protest are alike in vain;
My town and me, with Friesland's King agreed,
Surrendered, as they vowed, my vassal train.
Not doing by me any shameful deed,
Me he assured of life and of domain,
So I would soften my obdurate mood,
And be to wed with his Arbantes wooed.

"I, who would have consented to forego
My life to 'scape from him, reflection made,
That, save I first avenged myself, all woe,
Endured, would be by this regret outweighed.
Long time I muse, and to my misery know
'Tis only simulation that can aid.
Not simple willingness, I feign, desire,
To win his grace, and have him for my sire.

"From many in my father's service, I
Select two brothers fitted for my view,
Of valiant heart and great ability
But more approved for truth, as followers, who,
Bred in my father's court, from infancy
Had with myself grown up; the brothers two
So wholly bound to me, they would have thought
My safety with their lives was cheaply bought.

"To them I tell my project, and the pair
Of brethren promise me their faithful aid:
To Flanders this, a pinnace to prepare,
I sent, and that with me in Holland stayed,
Now, while both foreigners and natives were,
Of Friesland's kingdom, to our nuptials prayed,
Bireno in Biscay (the tidings went)
For Holland had equipped an armament.

"Since, on the issue of the earliest fray
When in the rout one hapless brother fell,
I had despatched a courier to Biscay,
Who the sad news should to Bireno tell;
While he toils sore his squadron to array,
Proud Friesland's arms our wretched remnant quell.
Bireno, who knew nought of this, had weighed,
And with his barques put forth to bring us aid.

"These tidings told to Friesland's monarch, he
Confiding to his son the wedding's care,
To meet Bireno's squadron puts to sea,
And (so chance willed) burns, sinks, or routs them there,
Leading him off into captivity;
But none to us as yet the tidings bear,
This while I to the amorous youth am wed,
Who, when the sun sought his, would seek my bed.

"Behind the curtains I had hid the tried
And faithful follower of whom I said,
Who moved not till the bridegroom he descried,
Yet waited not till he in bed was laid:
But raised a hatchet, and so well applied
Behind the stripling's head the ponderous blade,
Of speech and life it reft him; I, who note
The deed, leap lightly up and cut his throat.

"As falls the bullock upon shamble sill,
Thus fell the ill-starred stripling, in despite
Of King Cymosco, worst among the ill;
So was the impious King of Friesland hight
Who did my brothers and my father kill,
And, in my state to found a better right,
In wedlock wished to join me with his son,
Haply to slay me when his end was won.

"Ere new disturbance interrupt the deed,
Taking what costliest was and lightest weighed,
Me my companion by a cord, with speed,
Drops from a window, where with boat purveyed
In Flanders (as related) for my need,
His brother, watchful of our motions, stayed.
We dip the oar, we loose the sail, and driven
By both, escape, as was the will of Heaven.

"The daring feat achieved, I cannot say
If Friesland's King more sorrowed for his son,
Or raged at me; he there arrived, the day
Ensuing, where the dreadful deed was done.
Proud he returned, both he and his array,
Of the Duke taken and the victory won:
And thought to feast and nuptials he was bound,
But in his home all grief and darkness found.

"All known or said to be my friends, or who
Were friends of those that, chosen from my train,
Had aided me the deadly deed to do,
Their goods and chattels burnt, were doomed or slain:
And he had killed Bireno, since he knew
No other trouble could inflict such pain,
But that he, saving him in malice, thought
He had a net wherewith I might be caught.

"Yet him a cruel proposition made,
Granting a year his purpose to complete;
Condemned to privy death, till then delayed,
Save in that time, through force or through deceit,
He by his friends and kindred's utmost aid,
Doing or plotting, me from my retreat
Conveyed into his prisons; so that he
Can only saved by my destruction be.

"What for his safety could be done, behold,
Short of my own destruction, has been tried.
Six towns I had in Flanders: these I sold,
And (great or small the produce put aside)
A part of it, to wily persons told
That it to tempt his guards might be applied;
The rest of it dispensed to move and arm
Germans or English, to the miscreant's harm.

"My agents, whether they their trust betrayed,
Or that they could in truth perform no more.
Me with vain words instead of help have paid,
And scorn me, having drained my scanty store;
And now the term is high expired, when aid,
Whether of open force or treasured ore,
No longer will arrive in time to save
My cherished spouse from torture and the grave.

"Through him, from me was my dominion rent;
Through him, my father and my brethren slain;
Through him, the little treasure left me, spent
(What served alone existence to sustain)
To rescue him, in cruel durance pent;
Nor other means to succor him remain;
Save I, to liberate him from prison, go
And yield myself to such a cruel foe.

"If nothing more be left me then to try,
Nor other way for his escape appear,
Than his with this my wretched life to buy,
This life I gladly will lay down. One fear
Alone molests me; and it is that I
Can never my conditions make so clear,
As to assure me that, with new deceit,
Me, when his prey, the tyrant will not cheat.

"The occasion now that I confer with you,
And tell my case to all who seek the land,
Both lords and knights, is with the single view,
That taking counsel of so large a band,
Some one may indicate assurance due,
That when before the cruel King I stand,
No longer he Bireno shall detain;
Nor, after I am killed, the Duke be slain.

"Warrior to wend with me, I in my need,
When I shall be to Friesland given, have prayed;
But so he promise that the exchange agreed
Shall be between us in such manner made,
That from his bonds Bireno shall be freed
When I am to the monarch's hands conveyed;
Thus I, when I am slain, shall die content,
Who to my spouse shall life by death have lent.

"Now, if as strong Herculean port and bold
Appear to vouch, such worth to you belong;
And you believe to give me or withold
Is in your power, should he intend me wrong;
Be with me, when committed to his hold,
Since I shall fear not, in your convoy strong,
When you are with me, that my lord, though I
Be after slain, shall by his order die."

Orlando will not place her in the hand
Of her foul foe, to have Bireno freed;
He will save both the lovers, if his brand
And wonted valor fail him not at need.
Embarked that very day, they put from land
With a clear sky and prosperous wind to speed.
The County hastes in his impatient heat,
Eager to reach that isle, the monster's seat.

Through the still deeps, on this or the other side,
The skipper veered his canvas to the wind:
This isle, and that of Zealand, they descried,
One seen before, and one shut in behind.
The third day, from the harbored vessel's side,
In Holland, Roland goes ashore, not joined
By the complaining dame; whom to descend
He wills not till she hear that tyrant's end.

Orlando fares to Dordrecht, where he views
A numerous squadron, who the gate maintain;
As well because suspicion still ensues
On the foundation of a new domain,
As that before they had received the news,
That out of Zealand, backed with armed train,
Was coming with a fleet of many sail,
A cousin of the lord here pent in jail.

One, good Orlando to the monarch's ear
Bade bear a message, that an errant knight
On him would prove himself, with sword and spear;
But would lay down this pact before the fight:
That if the King unhorsed the cavalier,
Her who Arbantes slew, he, as his right,
Should have, that, at the cavalier's command,
Was ready for delivery to his hand;

And willed the King should on his side agree,
If him the knight in combat overbore,
Forthwith released from his captivity,
Bireno to full freedom to restore.
To him the footman does his embassy;
But he, who knightly worth or courteous lore
Had never known, directs his whole intent
The Count by treacherous fraud to circumvent.

He hopes as well, if he the warrior slay,
To have the dame, whom, so aggrieved, he hates,
If in the knight's disposal, and the say
Of that strange knight, the footman well relates.
Hence thirty men despatched by other way
Than to the portal led, where Roland waits;
Who with a long and privy circuit wind,
And come upon the paladin behind.

'Tis thus the King bars every path that lies
Free for the warrior's flight, with armed train:
He him alive, and in no other guise,
Would have, and lightly hopes his end to gain;
Nor for the earthly thunderbolt applies,
That had so many and so many slain;
Which here he deems would serve his purpose ill,
Where he desires to take and not to kill.

As wary fowler, bent on greater prey,
Wisely preserves alive the game first caught,
That by the call-bird and his cheating play,
More may within the circling net be brought;
Such cunning art Cymosco would assay.
But Roland would not be so lightly bought;
Like them by the first toil that springs betrayed;
And quickly forced the circle that was made.

Where he perceives the assailants thickest stand
He rests his lance, and sticks in his career
First one and afterward another, and
Another, and another, who appear
Of paste; till six he of the circling band
Of foes impales upon a single spear;
A seventh left out, who by the push is slain,
Since the clogged weapon can no more contain.

The lance now broke, his sword the warrior drew,
That sword which never yet was drawn in vain,
And still with cut or thrust some soldier slew;
Now horse, now footman of the tyrant's train.
And, ever where he dealt a stroke, changed blue,
Yellow, green, white, and black, to crimson stain.
Cymosco grieves, when most his needs require,
Not to have now his hollow cane and fire;*

And with loud voice and menacing command
Bids these be brought, but ill his followers hear;
For those who have found safety of his band,
To issue from the city are in fear.
He, when he sees them fly on either hand,
Would fly as well from that dread cavalier;
Makes for the gate and would the drawbridge lift,
But the pursuing County is too swift.

The monarch turns his back, and leaves the knight
Lord of the drawbridge and of either gate.
Thanks to his swifter steed, the rest in flight
He passes: good Orlando will not wait
(Intent the felon, not his band, to smite)
Upon the vulgar herd to wreck his hate.
But his slow horse seems restive; while the King's,
More nimble, flies as if equipt with wings.

From street to street, before the Count he made,
And vanished clean; but after little stay,
Came with new arms, with tube and fire purveyed;
Which, at his best, this while his men convey.
And posted at a corner, he waylaid
His foe, as hunter watches for his prey,
In forest, with armed dogs and spear, attending
The boar in fury from the hill descending,

* Fire-arms.

Who rends the branch and overthrows the stone;
And wheresoe'er he turns his haughty front,
Appears so loud the deafening crash and groan
As if he were uprending wood and mount.
Intent to make him his bold deed atone,
Cymosco at the pass expects the Count;
As soon as he appears, with ready light
Touches the hole, and fires upon the knight.

Behind, the weapon flames in lightning's guise,
And vents the thunder from before; the ground
Shakes under foot and city wall; the skies
The fearful echo all about rebound.
The burning bolt with sudden fury flies,
Not sparing aught which in its course is found.
Hissing and whizzing through the skies it went;
But smote not, to the assassin's foul intent.

Whether it was his great desire to kill
That baron, or his hurry made him fail,
Or trembling heart, like leaf that flutters still,
Made hand and arm together flinch and quail;
Or that it was not the Creator's will
The Church so soon her champion should bewail;
The glancing stroke his courser's belly tore,
Outstretched on earth, from thence to rise no more.

To earth fall horse and rider: this the knight
Scarce touched; the other thundering pressed the plain:
For the first rose so ready and so light,
He from the fall seemed breath and force to gain.
As African Anteus, in the fight,
Rose from the sand with prouder might and main;
So when Orlando touched the ground, to view
He rose with doubled force and vigor new.

He who has seen the thunder, from on high,
Discharged by Jove with such a horrid sound,
Descend where nitre, coal, and sulphur lie,
Stored up for use in magazine profound,
Which scarce has reached—but touched it, ere the sky
Is in a flame, as well as burning ground,
Firm walls are split, and solid marble riven,
And flying stones cast up as high as heaven;

Let him imagine, when from earth he sprung,
Such was the semblance of the cavalier;
Who moved in mode to frighten Mars among
The gods, so fierce and horrid was his cheer.
At this dismay'd, the King of Friesland stung
His horse, and turned his rein, to fly the peer:
But fierce Orlando was upon his foe
Faster than arrow flies from bended bow:

And, what before he could not, when possest
Of his good courser, now afoot will do.
His speed outgoes all thought in every breast,
Exceeds all credence, save in those who view.
The tyrant shortly joined, he on the crest
Smote at his head so well, he cleft it through;
And to the neck divided by the blow,
Sent it, to shake its last on earth below.

Lo! in the frighted city other sound
Was heard to rise, and other clash of brands.
From troop who, thither in his guidance bound,
Followed Bireno's cousin from his lands:
Who, since the unguarded gates he open found,
Into the city's heart had poured his bands;
Where the bold paladin had struck such fear,
He without let might scour it far and near.

In rout the people fly, who cannot guess
Who these may be, or what the foes demand:
But, when this man and that by speech and dress
As Zealand-men distinguishes the band,
Carte blanche they proffer, and the chief address,
Bidding him range them under his command;
Against the Frieslanders to lend him aid,
Who have their Duke in loathesome prison stayed.

To Friesland's King that people hatred bore
With all his following; who their ancient lord
Had put to death, and who by them yet more,
As evil and rapacious, was abhorred.
Orlando interposed with kindly lore,
As friend of both, the parties to accord;
By whom, so joined, no Frieslander was left
But was of life or liberty bereft.

They would not wait to seek the dungeon-key,
But breaking down the gate, their entrance made.
Bireno to the Count with courtesy
And grateful thanks the service done repaid.
Thence they, together with large company,
Went where Olympia in her vessel stayed:
For so was the expecting lady hight,
To whom that island's crown belonged of right.

She who had thither good Orlando brought,
Not hoping that he would have thriven so well;
—Enough for her, if by her misery bought,
Her spouse was rescued from the tyrant's cell!—
Her, full of love and loyal homage, sought
The people one and all: 'twere long to tell
How she caressed Bireno, he the maid—
What thanks both lovers to the County paid.

The people, throned in her paternal reign,
  Replace the injured dame, and fealty swear:
She on the Duke, to whom in solid chain
  Love with eternal knot had linked the fair,
The empire of herself and her domain
  Conferred. He, called away by other care,
Left in the cousin's guardian care this while
His fortresses and all the subject isle.

Since he to visit Zealand's duchy planned,
  His faithful consort in his company;
And thence, upon the King of Friesland's land,
  Would try his fortune (as he said), for he
A pledge, he rated highly, had in hand,
  Which seemed of fair success the warranty,
The daughter of the King; who, here forsaken,
With many others had been prisoner taken.

To a younger brother, her, the Duke pretends,
  To be conjoined in wedlock, he conveyed.
The Roman senator* thence parting wends
  Upon the very day Bireno weighed;
But he to nothing else his hand extends
  Of all the many, many prizes made,
Save to that engine, found amid the plunder,
Which in all points I said resembled thunder.

Not with intent in his defense to bear
  What he had taken, of the prize possest;
For he still held it an ungenerous care
  To go with vantage on whatever quest;
But with design to cast the weapon where
  It never more should living wight molest;
And what was appertaining to it all
Bore off as well, the powder and the ball.

Nor he in England nor in Ireland port
  Will make, nor on the coast that's opposite
But let him go, the naked archer's sport,
  Sore smitten in the heart!—ere I indite
Yet more of him, to Holland I resort,
  And you to bear me company I invite,
For well I wot that you as well as me
'Twould grieve *that* bridal should without us be.

---

*Orlando.

CANTO VII

A daughter they have found (above was said)
Of the proud King who ruled the Friesland state;
That with Bireno's brother was to wed,
As far as rumor tells; but to relate
The truth, a longing in Bireno bred
The sight of food so passing delicate;
And he to balk his palate deemed would be,
For other's sake, a foolish courtesy.

The gentle damsel had not passed fourteen,
Was beautiful and fresh, and like a rose,
When this first opening from its bud is seen,
And with the vernal sun expands and grows.
To say Bireno loved the youthful queen
Were little; with less blaze lit tinder glows,
Or ripened corn, wherever envious hand
Of foe amid the grain has cast a brand,

Than that which on Bireno's bosom fed,
And to his marrow burned, when, weeping sore
The fate of her unhappy father dead,
He saw her bathed in ceaseless tears deplore;
And, as cold water, on the cauldron shed,
Stops short the bubbling wave, which boiled before,
So was the raging fire Olympia blew
Within his breast, extinguished by a new.

Nor feels Bireno mere satiety;
He loathes her so, he ill endures her sight;
And, if his hope is long deferred, will die:
For other such his fickle appetite!
Yet till the day prefixed to satisfy
His fond desire, so feigns the weary knight,
Olympia less to love than to adore
He seems, and but her pleasure to explore.

And if the other he too much caress,
Who cannot but caress her, there are none
See evil in the deed, but rather guess
It is in pity, is in goodness done;
Since to raise up and comfort in distress
Whom Fortune's wheel beats down in changeful run,
Was never blamed; with glory oftener paid;
So much the more, a young, a harmless maid.

Almighty God! how fallible and vain
Is human judgment, dimmed by clouds obscure!
Bireno's actions, impious and profane,
By others are reputed just and pure.
Already stooping to their oars, the train
Have loosed his vessel from the port secure,
And with the Duke and his companions steer
For Zealand through the deep, with merry cheer.

Already Holland and its headlands all
Are left astern, and now descried no more;
Since to shun Friesland they to larboard haul,
And keep their course more near the Scottish shore;
When they are overtaken by a squall,
And drive three days the open sea before:
Upon the third, when now, near eventide,
A barren and unpeopled isle is spied.

The lover false, who hatching treason lies,
Stole from his bed in silence, when he knew
She slept: his clothes he in a bundle ties,
Nor other raiment on his body threw.
Then issuing forth from the pavilion hies,
As if on new-born wings, toward his crew;
Who, roused, unmoor without a cry, as he
Commands, and loosen thence and put to sea.

On the far shore there rose a rock; below
Scooped by the breakers beating frequently:
The cliff was hollowed underneath, in show
Of arch, and overhung the foaming sea.
Olympia (mind such vigor did bestow)
Sprang up the frowning crest impetuously,
And, at a distance, stretched by favoring gale,
Thence saw her cruel lord's departing sail.

But let her grieve till my return. To show
Now of the childe I wish: his weary way
Rogero, in the noon's intensest glow,
Takes by the shore: the burning sunbeams play
Upon the hill and thence rebound; below
Boils the white sand; while heated with the ray,
Little is wanting in that journey dire,
But that the arms he wears are all on fire.

While to the warrior thirst and labor sore,
Still toiling through that heavy sand, as he
Pursued his path along the sunny shore,
Were irksome and displeasing company,
Beneath the shadow of a turret hoar,
Which rose beside the beach, amid the sea,
He found three ladies of Alcina's court,
As such distinguished by their dress and port.

They, who beheld along the shifting sand
Rogero wend, upon his way intent,
And saw thirst figured on his lips, and scanned
His troubled visage, all with sweat besprent,
Began to pray, on what he had in hand
He would not show his heart so deeply bent,
But that he in the cool and grateful shade
Would rest his weary limbs, beside them laid.

To hold the stirrup one approaching near,
  Would aid him to alight; the other bore
A cup of crystal to the cavalier,
  With foaming wine, which raised his thirst the more;
But to the music of their speech no ear
  He lent, who weened if he his way forbore
For anything, each let would time supply
To Alcina to arrive, who now was nigh.

Not so saltpetre fine and sulphur pure,
  Touched with the fiery spark, blaze suddenly;
Not so loud ocean raves, when the obscure
  Whirlwind descends and camps in middle sea,
As viewing thus the knight proceed secure
  Upon his journey, and aware that he
Scorns them, who still believe they beauteous are,
Kindled the third of those three damsels fair.

As loud as she could raise her voice she said:
  "Thou art not gentle, nor art thou a knight;
And hast from other arms and horse conveyed,
  Which never could be thine by better right.
So be thy theft, if well I guess, appaid
  By death, which this may worthily requite!
Foul thief, churl, haughty ingrate, may I thee
Burned, gibbeted, or cut in quarters see!"

Beside all these and more injurious cries,
  Which the proud damsel at the warrior throws,
Though to her taunts Rogero nought replies,
  Who weens small fame from such a contest flows;
She with her sisters to the frigate hies,
  Which waits them, and aboard the tender goes;
And plying fast the oars, pursue the knight
Along the sandy beach, still kept in sight.

On him with threat and curse she ever cried;
  Whose tongue collected still fresh cause for blame.
Meanwhile, where to the lovelier fairy's side
  The passage lay across a strait, he came;
And there an ancient ferryman espied
  Put from the other shore with punctual aim,
As if forewarned and well prepared, the seer
Waited the coming of the cavalier.

He praised Rogero much, that he had fled
  In time from false Alcina, and before
To him the dame had given the chalice dread,
  Her lover's final guerdon evermore.
Next that he had to Logistilla sped,
  Where he should duly witness holy lore,
And beauty infinite and grace enjoy,
Which feed and nourish hearts they never cloy.

"Her shall you, struck with wonderment, revere,"
He said, "when first you shall behold the fay;
But better contemplate her lofty cheer,
And you no other treasure shall appay.
In this her love from others differs: fear
And hope in other on the bosom prey;
In hers Desire demands not aught beside,
And with the blessing seen is satisfied."

Then he beholds forth-issuing from the strand,
A fleet of ships, which all toward him steer.
With these came wronged Alcina, with a band
Of many vassals, gathered far and near;
To risk the ruin of herself and land,
Or repossess the thing she held so dear.
"Now—now, Rogero, bare the magic shield,
Or in the strife be slain, or basely yield!"

Thus Logistilla's pilot; and beside
So saying, seized the pouch, wherein was dight
The buckler, and the covering torn aside,
Exposed to open view the shining light.
The enchanted splendor, flashing far and wide,
So sore offends the adversaries' sight,
They from their vessels drop amazed and blind,
Tumbling from prow before, and poop behind.

One who stood sentry on the citadel
Descried the navy of the invading dame,
And backward rang the castle larum-bell,
Whence speedy succors to the haven came.
The artillery rained like storm, whose fury fell
On all who would Rogero scathe and shame:
So that such aid was brought him in the strife
As saved the warrior's liberty and life.

Four ladies are arrived upon the strand,
Thither by Logistilla sped in haste:
Leagued with the valiant Andronica stand
Fronesia sage, Dicilla good, and chaste
Sofrosina, who, as she has in hand
More than the others, 'mid the foremost placed
Conspicuous flames. Forth issues from the fort
A matchless host, and files toward the port.

Beneath the castle, safe from wind and swell,
Of many ships and stout, a squadron lay;
Which, in the harbor, at a sound from bell—
A word, were fit for action, night or day;
And thus by land and sea was battle, fell
And furious, waged on part of either fay:
Whence was Alcina's realm turned upside down
Of which she had usurped her sister's crown.

Oh, of how many battles the success
Is different from what was hoped before!
Not only failed the dame to repossess,
As thought, her lover flying from her shore,
But out of ships, even now so numberless
That ample ocean scarce the navy bore,
From all her vessels, to the flames a prey,
But with one bark escaped the wretched fay.

Alcina flies; and her sad troop around
Routed and taken, burnt or sunk, remains.
To have lost Rogero, sorrow more profound
Wakes in her breast than all her other pains;
And she, in bitter tears for ever drowned,
Of the childe's loss by night and day complains;
And bent to end her woes, with many a sigh,
Often laments her that she cannot die.

Return we, where eternal fame is due,
Leaving Alcina in her trouble sore:
I speak of valorous Rogero, who
Had now debarked upon the safer shore.
He turned his back upon the waters blue,
Giving God thanks for all with pious lore;
And on dry ground now landed, made repair
Toward the lofty castle planted there.

On arches raised, whereon the firmament
Seemed to repose as props, so fair in show
Are lovely gardens, and of such extent
As even would be hard to have below.
Clustering 'twixt lucid tower or battlement,
Green odoriferous shrubs are seen to grow,
Which through the summer and the winter shoot,
And teem with beauteous blossom and ripe fruit.

And here the verdure still is permanent,
Still permanent the eternal blossoms are;
Not that kind nature, in her government,
So nicely tempers her the genial air,
But that, unneeding any influence lent
By planet, Logistilla's zeal and care
Ever keep fast (what may appear a thing
Impossible) her own perpetual spring.

That such a gentle lord had sought her rest,
Did much the prudent Logistilla please,
And she commanded he should be carest,
And all should seek to do him courtesies.
Sometime had Sir Astolpho been her guest,
Whom with a joyful heart Rogero sees.
There in few days resorted all the crew,
Changed by Melissa to their shapes anew.

When they a day or more their weariness
Had eased, Rogero sought the prudent fay;
With him the Duke Astolpho, who no less
Desired to measure back his western way.
Melissa was for both ambassadress,
And for the warlike pair, with humble say
To favor, warn and help them, prayed the dame;
So that they might return from whence they came.

"I," said the fay, "will think upon this need,
And in two days the pair will expedite."
Then thought how good Rogero she should speed,
And afterward how aid the English knight.
She wills the first shall on the griffin-steed
To the Aquitanian shores direct his flight;
But first will fashion for the flying-horse
A bit, to guide him and restrain his course.

Rogero thence departs; but as before
Takes not the way he took in his despite,
When him above the sea the courser bore,
And seldom was the land beneath in sight.
But taught to make him beat his wings and soar,
Here, there, as liked him best, with docile flight,
Returning, he another path pursued;
As Magi erst, who Herod's snare eschewed.

Although the childe by every wish was pressed
Quickly to seek his Bradamant, yet he
With taste of roving round the world possest,
Would not desist from it, till Hungary
He had seen; and Polacks, Germans, and the rest
Should in his wide extended circuit see,
Inhabiting that horrid, northern land;
And came at last to England's farthest strand.

Where he in meadows to the city nigh
Saw troops of men at arms, and footmen spread:
Who, to the drum and trumpet marching by,
Divided into goodly bands, were led
Before Rinaldo, flower of chivalry;
He that (if you remember it) was said
To have been sent by Charlemagne, and made
His envoy to these parts in search of aid.

Rogero came exactly as the show
Of that fair host was made without the town,
And of a knight the occasion sought to know;
But from the griffin-horse first lighted down;
And he who courteous was informed him how
Of kingdoms holding of the British crown,
English, Scotch, Irish, and the islands nigh,
Those many banners were, upreared on high.

"Forty-two thousand muster in array,
The men at arms and mounted archers there.
By a hundred I misreckon not, or they,
The fighting footmen, twice as many are.
Those ensigns yellow, brown, and green, survey,
And that striped blue and black. The foot repair
Each to his separate flag where these are spread;
By Godfrey, Henry, Hermant, Edward, led."

What time Rogero sees the fair array,
Whose bands to succor ravaged France prepare,
And notes and talks of ensigns they display,
And names of British lords, to him repair
One and another, crowding to survey
His courser, single of its kind, or rare:
All thither hasten, wondering and astound,
And compassing the warrior, form around.

So that to raise more wonder in the train,
And to make better sport, as him they eyed,
Rogero shook the flying courser's rein,
And lightly with the rowels touched his side:
He toward heaven uprising, soared amain,
And left behind each gazer stupefied.
Having from end to end the English force
So viewed, he next for Ireland shaped his course;

And saw the fabulous Hibernia, where
The godly, sainted elder made the cave,
In which men cleansed from all offences are;
Such mercy there, it seems, is found to save.
Thence o'er that sea he spurred, through yielding air,
Whose briny waves the lesser Britain lave;
And, looking down, Angelica descried
In passing, to the rock with fetters tied;

Bound to the naked rock upon the strand,
In the Isle of Tears; for the Isle of Tears was hight
That which was peopled by the inhuman band,
So passing fierce and full of foul despite;
Who, as I told above, on every hand
Cruised with their scattered fleet by day or night;
And every beauteous woman bore away,
Destined to be a monster's evil prey:

There but that morning bound in cruel wise;
Where (to devour a living damsel sped)
The orc, that measureless sea-monster, hies,
Which on abominable food is fed.
How on the beach the maid became the prize
Of the rapacious crew, above was said,
Who found her sleeping near the enchanter hoar,
Who her had thither brought by magic lore.

The cruel and inhospitable crew
To the voracious beast the dame expose
Upon the sea-beat shore, as bare to view
As nature did at first her work compose.
Not even a veil she has, to shade the hue
Of the white lily and vermilion rose,
Which mingled in her lovely members meet,
Proof to December snow and July heat.

And as he fastened his on her fair eyes,
His Bradamant he called to mind again.
Pity and love wthin his bosom rise
At once, and ill he can from tears refrain;
And in soft tone he to the damsel cries,
When he has checked his flying courser's rein,
"O lady, worthy but that chain to wear,
With which Love's faithful servants fettered are,

"And most unworthy this or other ill,
What wretch has had the cruelty to wound
And gall those snowy hands with livid stain,
Thus painfully with grinding fetters bound?"
At this she cannot choose but show like grain,
Of crimson spreading on an ivory ground;
Knowing those secret beauties are espied,
Which, howsoever lovely, shame would hide;

And gladly with her hands her face would hood,
Were they not fastened to the rugged stone:
But with her tears (for this at least she could)
Bedewed it, and essayed to hold it down.
Sobbing some while the lovely damsel stood;
Then loosed her tongue and spake in feeble tone;
But ended not; arrested in mid-word,
By a loud noise which in the sea was heard.

Lo and behold! the unmeasured beast appears,
Half surging and half hidden, in such sort
As sped by roaring and long carack steers
From north or south, toward her destined port.
So the sea-monster to his food repairs:
And now the interval between is short.
Half dead the lady is through fear endured,
Ill by that other's comfort reassured.

Rogero overhand, not in the rest,
Carries his lance, and beats, with downright blow,
The monstrous orc. What this resembled best,
But a huge, writhing mass, I do not know;
Which were no form of animal exprest,
Save in the head, with eyes and teeth of sow.
His forehead, 'twixt the eyes, Rogero smites,
But as on steel or rock the weapon lights.

When he perceives the first of no avail,
The knight returns to deal a better blow;
The orc, who sees the shifting shadow sail
Of those huge pinions on the sea below,
In furious heat, deserts his sure regale
On shore, to follow that deceitful show:
And rolls and reels behind it, as it fleets.
Rogero drops, and oft the stroke repeats.

But the fell orc Rogero does not smite
With lance or falchion where the tushes grow,
But aims that 'twixt the ears his blow may light;
Now on the spine, or now on tail below.
And still in time descends or soars upright,
And shifts his course, to cheat the veering foe:
But as if beating on a jasper block,
Can never cleave the hard and rugged rock.

He then new counsel took, and 'twas the best,
With other arms the monster to pursue;
And lifting from his shield the covering vest,
To dazzle with the light his blasted view,
Landward toward the rock-chained maid he pressed,
And on her little finger, lest a new
Mischance should follow, slipt the ring, which brought
The enchantment of the magic shield to nought.

He gave it now Angelica; for he
Feared lest the buckler's light should be impaired,
And willed as well those beauteous eyes should be
Defended, which had him already snared.
Pressing beneath his paunch full half the sea,
Now to the shore the monstrous whale repaired.
Firm stood Rogero, and the veil undone
Appeared to give the sky another sun.

He in the monster's eyes the radiance throws,
Which works as it was wont in other time.
As trout or grayling to the bottom goes
In stream, which mountaineer disturbs with lime;
So the enchanted buckler overthrows
The orc, reversed among the foam and slime.
Rogero here and there the beast astound
Still beats, but cannot find the way to wound.

This while the lady begs him not to bray
Longer the monster's rugged scale in vain.
"For heaven's sake, turn and loose me," did she say,
Still weeping, "ere the orc awake again,
Bear me with thee, and drown me in mid-way.
Let me not this foul monster's food remain."
By her just plaint Rogero moved, forbore,
Untied the maid, and raised her from the shore.

Upon the beach the courser plants his feet,
And goaded by the rowel, towers in air,
And gallops with Rogero in mid seat,
While on the croup behind him sate the fair:
Who of his banquet so the monster cheat;
For him too delicate and dainty fare.
Rogero turns and with thick kisses plies
The lady's snowy breast and sparkling eyes.

He kept no more the way, as he before
Proposed, for compassing the whole of Spain:
But stopt his courser on the neighboring shore
Where lesser Britain runs into the main.
Upon the bank there rose an oakwood hoar,
Where Philomel forever seemed to plain;
I' the middle was a meadow with a fountain,
And, at each end, a solitary mountain.

CANTO VIII

What reason now Rogero shall withold
From taking with Angelica delight—
That gentle maid, there naked in his hold,
In the lone forest, and secure from sight?
Of Bradamant he thinks not, who controlled
His bosom erst: and foolish were the knight,
If thinking of that damsel as before,
By this he had not set an equal store;

Warmed by whose youthful beauties, the severe
Xenocrates would not have been more chaste.
The impatient childe had dropped both shield and spear
And hurrying now his other arms uncased;
When, casting down her eyes in shame and fear
The virtuous ring upon her finger placed,
Angelica descried, and which of yore
From her Brunello in Albracca bore.

Now that she this upon her hand surveys,
She is so full of pleasure and surprise,
She doubts it is a dream, and, in amaze,
Hardly believes her very hand and eyes.
Then softly to her mouth the hoop conveys,
And, quicker than the flash that cleaves the skies,
From bold Rogero's sight her beauty shrouds,
As disappears the sun, concealed in clouds.

"Ungrateful damsel! and is this the pay
You render for the service done?" said he.
"Why rather would you steal my ring away
Than have it as a welcome gift from me?
Not only this, but use me as you may,
I, and my shield and courser, yours shall be;
So you no more conceal your beauteous cheer.
Cruel, though answering not, I know you hear."

So saying, like one blind, with bootless care,
Feeling his way about the fount he strayed.
How often he embraced the empty air,
Hoping in this to have embraced the maid!
Meanwhile, now far removed, the flying fair
Had halted not, till to a cave conveyed.
Formed in a mountain was that harbor rude,
Spacious, and for her need supplied with food.

'Twas here an aged herdsman, one who tended
A numerous troop of mares, had made his won:
These, seeking pasture, through the valley wended,
Where the green grass was fed by freshening run:
While stalls on either side the cave defended
His charge from the oppressive noontide sun;
Angelica, within, that livelong day,
Unseen of prying eyes, prolonged her stay;

And about evening, when refreshed with rest
And food, she deemed her course she might renew;
In certain rustic weeds her body dressed:
How different from those robes of red, or blue,
Green, yellow, purple, her accustomed vest,
So various in its fashion, shape, and hue!
Then, and then first conceived the thought, again
To seek in the Levant her ancient reign.

This while Rogero, after he had passed
Long space in hope the maid might re-appear,
Awakened from his foolish dream at last,
And found she was not nigh, and did not hear.
Then to remount his griffin-courser cast,
In earth and air accustomed to career.
But, having slipt his bit, the winged horse
Had towered and soared in air a freer course.

Afflicted beyond measure, he, with shield
Cast on his shoulder, and new-cased in mail,
Left the seaside, and through a grassy field
Pursued his way, toward a spacious vale:
Where he beheld a path, by wood concealed,
The widest and most beaten in the dale.
Nor far had wound the closest shades within,
Ere on his right he heard a mighty din.

He heard a din, and fearful clashing sound
Of arms, and hurrying on with eager pace
'Twixt tree and tree, two furious champions found,
Waging fierce fight in close and straitened place,
Who to each other (warring on what ground
I know not) neither showed regard nor grace.
The one a giant was of haughty cheer,
And one a bold and gallant cavalier.

Covered with shield and sword, one, leaping, sped
Now here, now there, and thus himself defended,
Lest a two-handed mace upon his head
Should fall, with which the giant still offended;
On the field lay his horse, already dead.
Rogero paused, and to the strife attended;
And straight his wishes lean toward the knight,
Whom he would fain see conqueror in the fight:

Yet not for this would lend the champion aid,
But to behold the cruel strife stood nigh.
Lo! a two-handed stroke the giant made
Upon the lesser warrior's casque, and by
The mighty blow the knight was overlaid:
The other, when astound he saw him lie,
To deal the foe his death, his helm untied,
So that the warrior's face Rogero spied.

Of his sweet lady, of his passing fair
And dearest Bradamant Rogero spies
The lovely visage, of its helmet bare;
Toward whom, to deal her death, the giant hies;
So that advancing with his sword in air,
To sudden battle him the childe defies.
But he, who will not wait for new alarm,
Takes the half lifeless lady in his arm.

And on his shoulder flings and bears away;
As sometimes wolf a little lamb will bear,
Or eagle in her crooked claws convey
Pigeon, or such-like bird, through liquid air.
Rogero runs with all the speed he may,
Who sees how needed is his succor there,
But with such strides the giant scours the plain,
Him with his eyes the knight pursues with pain.

This flying and that following, the two
Kept a close path, which widened still, and they
Piercing that forest, issued forth to view
On a wide meadow, which without it lay.
But follow we the good Orlando, who
So burns to seek Ebuda far away,
Whose foul inhabitants a monster sate
With flesh of women, fair and delicate.

But no less slow than eager was the knight;
The winds appear, which still his course delay;
Who, whether blowing on the left or right,
Or poop, so faintly in his canvas play,
His bark makes little speed, and, spent outright,
The breeze that wafts her sometimes dies away,
Or blows so foul that he is fain to steer
Another course, or to the leeward veer.

It was the will of heaven that he, before
The King of Ireland, should not reach the land,
That he with greater ease upon that shore
Might act what shortly you shall understand,
"Make for the isle. Now," said he, "may'st thou moor."
(Thus issuing to the pilot his command),
"And give me for my need the skiff; for I
Will to the rock without more company.

"The biggest cable that thou hast aboard,
And biggest anchor to my hands consign.
Thou shalt perceive why thus my boat is stored,
If I but meet that monster of the brine."
He bade them lower the pinnace overboard,
With all things that befitted his design;
His arms he left behind, except his blade,
And singly for the rocky island made.

Approaching to the naked rock as near
As vigorous hand might serve to cast a stone,
He knew not if he heard, or did not hear
A cry, so faint and feeble was the moan.
When, turning to the left, the cavalier,
His level sight along the water thrown,
Naked as born, bound to a stump, espied
A dame, whose feet were wetted by the tide.

Because she distant is, and evermore
Holds down her face, he ill can her discern:
Both sculls he pulls amain, and nears the shore
With keen desire more certain news to learn:
But now the winding beach is heard to roar,
And wood and cave the mighty noise return;
The billows swell, and, lo! the beast! who pressed,
And nigh concealed the sea beneath his breast.

Orlando, well resolved in his intent,
Moved quickly to perform the feat he planned;
And, for he would the damsel's harm prevent,
And would with that assail the beast at hand,
Between her and the orc the boat he sent,
Leaving within the sheath his idle brand.
Anchor and cable next he takes in hold,
And waits the foe with constant heart and bold.

As soon as him the monster has descried,
And skiff at little interval, his throat
The fish, to swallow him, expands so wide,
That horse and horseman through his jaws might float.
Here Roland with the anchor, and beside
(Unless I am mistaken) with the boat
Plunged, and, engulfed the parted teeth betwixt,
His anchor in the tongue and palate fixt;

So that the monster could no longer drop
Or raise his horrid jaws, which this extends.
'Tis thus who digs the mine is wont to prop
The ground, and where he works the roof suspends,
Lest sudden ruin whelm him from atop,
While he incautiously his task intends.
Roland (so far apart was either hook)
But by a leap could reach the highest crook.

The prop so placed, Orlando now secure
That one fell beast his mouth no more can close,
Unsheathes his sword, and, in that cave obscure,
Deals here and there, now thrusts, now trenchant blows;
As well as citadel, whose walls immure
The assailants, can defend her from her foes,
The monster, harassed by the war within,
Defends himself against the paladin.

Now floats the monstrous beast, o'ercome with pain,
Whose scaly flanks upon the waves expand;
And now descends into the deepest main,
Scours at the bottom, and stirs up the sand.
The rising flood ill able to sustain,
The cavalier swims forth, and makes for land.
He leaves the anchor fastened in his tongue,
And grasps the rope that from the anchor hung.

So swimming till the island is attained,
With this toward the rock Orlando speeds:
He hauls the anchor home (a footing gained),
Pricked by whose double fluke, the monster bleeds.
The laboring orc to follow is constrained,
Dragged by that force which every force exceeds;
Which at a single sally more achieves
Than at ten turns the circling windlass heaves.

Forth from his grotto aged Proteus hies,
And mounts above the surface at the sound;
And, having seen Orlando dive, and rise
From the orc, and drag the monstrous fish to ground,
His scattered flock forgot, o'er ocean flies;
While so the din increases, that, astound,
Neptune bids yoke his dolphins, and that day
For distant Æthiopia posts away.

With Melicerta on her shoulders, weeping
Ino and Nereids with disheveled hair,
The Glauci, Tritons, and their fellows, leaping
They know not whither, speed, some here, some there,
Orlando draws to land, the billows sweeping,
That horrid fish, but might his labor spare:
For, with the torment worn, and travel sore,
The brute, exhausted, died ere dragged ashore.

Of the islanders had trooped no petty throng,
To witness that strange fight, who by a vain
And miserable superstition stung,
Esteemed such holy deed a work profane;
And said that this would be another wrong
To Proteus, and provoke his ire again;
Make him his herds pour forth upon the strand,
And with the whole old warfare vex the land.

These, armed with sling, or bow, upon the shore,
And these supplied with spear or sword descend;
And on each side, behind him and before,
Distant and near, as best they can, offend
At such a brutal insult wonders sore
The peer, who sees that mischief they intend,
In vengeance for the cruel monster slain,
Whence he had glory hoped, and praise to gain.

But as the usage is of surly bear,
By sturdy Russ or Lithuanian led,
Little to heed the dogs in crowded fair,
Nor even at their yelps to turn his head,
The clamor of the churls assembled there
Orlando witnessed with as little dread;
Who knew that he the rout that threatened death
Had power to scatter at a single breath:

And speedily he made them yield him place,
When, turned on them, he grasped his trenchant blade.
Misjudging of his worth. the foolish race
Deemed that he would have short resistance made;
Since him they saw no covering buckler brace,
Uncuirassed, nor in other arms arrayed;
But knew not that, from head to foot, a skin
More hard than diamond cased the paladin.

What by Orlando others cannot do,
The knight by others can; at half a score
Of blows in all he thirty killed; by few
He pass'd that measure, if the strokes were more;
And had already turned him to undo
The naked lady, having cleared the shore,
When other larum sounds, and other cries
From a new quarter of the island rise.

While so the paladin had kept in play
The barbarous islanders, upon that hand,
The men of Ireland, without let or fray,
Had poured from many quarters on the strand,
And now, without remorse or pity, slay
The inhabitants, through all the wasted land,
And, was it justice moved, or cruel rage,
Slaughter without regard to sex or age.

Little or no defense the island-crew
Attempt; in part as taken unaware,
In part that in the little place are few,
And that those few without a purpose are.
'Mid sack and fire, the wasted country through,
The islanders are slain, and everywhere
The walls are upon earth in ruin spread,
Nor in the land is left a living head.

As if the mighty tumult that he hears
And shriek and ruin had concerned him nought,
The naked rock the bold Orlando nears,
Where she was placed, to feed the monster brought.
He looks, and known to him the dame appears,
And more appears, when nigher her he sought:
Olympia she appears, and is indeed
Olympia, whose faith reaped so ill a meed.

Wretched Olympia, whom, besides the scorn
That Love put on her, Fortune too pursued,
Who sent the corsairs fell, which her had borne
That very day to the island of Ebude.
She Roland recollects on his return
Landward; but, for the damsel naked stood,
Not only nought she to the warrior said,
But dared not raise her eyes, and dropt her head.

Orlando asks what evil destiny
Her to that cruel island had conveyed
From where she in as much felicity
Was with her consort left as could be said:
"I know not," cried the weeping dame, "if I
Have thanks to render thee for death delayed,
Or should lament me that, through means of thee,
This day did not my woes concluded see.

"I have to thank thee that from death, too dread
And monstrous, thy good arm deliverance gave,
Which would have been too monstrous, had I fed
The beast, and in his belly found a grave:
But cannot thank thee that I am not dead,
Since death alone can me from misery save.
Well shall I thank thee for that wished relief,
Which can deliver me from every grief."

Next she related, with loud sobs and sighs,
How her false spouse betrayed her as she lay
Asleep, and how, of pirates made the prize,
They bore her from the desert isle away.
And, as she spake, she turned her in the guise
Of Dian, framed by artists, who portray
Her carved or painted, as in liquid font
She threw the water in Actæon's front.

For, as she can, her waist she hides, and breast,
More liberal of her flowing flank and reins.
Roland desires his ship, to find a vest
To cover her, delivered from her chains.
While he is all intent upon this quest,
Oberto comes; Oberto, he that reigns
O'er Ireland's people, who had understood
How lifeless lay the monster of the flood;

And, swimming, how, amid the watery roar,
A knight a weighty anchor in his throat
Had fix'd, and so had dragged him to the shore,
As men against the current track a boat.
This while Oberto comes; who, if his lore
Who told the tale were true, desires to note;
While his invading army, far and wide,
Ebuda burn and waste on every side.

Oberto, though the paladin to sight
Was dripping, and with water foul and gore;
With gore that from the orc, emerged to light,
Whom he had entered bodily, he bore,
He for the County knew the stranger knight
As he perused his face; so much the more
That he had thought when told the tidings, none
Save Roland could such mighty feat have done;

Knew him, because a page of honor he
Had been in France, and for the crown, his right
Upon his father's death, had crossed the sea
The year before. So often he the knight
Had seen, and had with him held colloquy,
Their times of meeting had been infinite.
He doffed his casque, with festive welcome pressed
Toward the Count, and clasped him to his breast.

Orlando is no less rejoiced to see
The King, than is the King that champion true.
After with friendly cheer and equal glee
Had once or twice embraced the noble two,
To Oberto Roland told the treachery
That had been done the youthful dame, and who
Had done it—false Bireno—that among
All men should least have sought to do her wrong.

To him he told the many proofs and clear
By which the dame's affection had been tried;
And how she for Bireno kin and geer
Had lost, and would in fine for him have died.
And how he this could warrant and appear
To vouch for much, as witness on her side,
While thus to him her griefs Orlando showed,
The lady's shining eyes with tears o'erflowed.

Oberto her to Holland vows to bear,
And until she is to her state restored,
And just and memorable vengeance there
Achieved upon her perjured traitor lord,
He never will unceasing war forbear,
Waged with all means that Ireland can afford;
And this with all his speed. He, up and down,
Meantime bids seek for female vest and gown.

Nor will it need to send in search of vest
Beyond the savage island's narrow bound,
Since thither every day in such came dressed
Some dame, to feed the beast, from countries round.
Nor long his followers pursued the quest,
Ere many they of various fashion found.
So was Olympia clothed; while sad of mood
Was he, not so to clothe her as he would.

To see that love so kindled by the dame,
On many grounds Orlando was content;
Who not alone rejoiced that such a shame
Put upon her, Bireno should repent;
But, that in the design on which he came,
He should be freed from grave impediment.
Not for Olympia thither had he made,
But, were his lady there, to lend her aid.

To him, that there she was not, soon was clear,
But clear it was not if she had been there,
Or no; since of those islesmen far and near.
One was not left the tidings to declare.
The following day they from the haven steer,
And all united in one squadron fare.
The paladin with them to Ireland hies,
From whence to France the warrior's passage lies.

Hardly a day in Ireland's realm he spends;
And for no prayers his purposed end forbore.
Love that in quest of his liege lady sends
The knight upon this track, permits no more.
Departing, he Olympia recommends
To the Irish monarch, who to serve her swore;
Although this needed not, since he was bent,
More than behoved, her wishes to content.

So levied in few days his warlike band,
And (league with England's king and Scotland's made)
In Holland and in Friesland left no land
To the false Duke, so rapid was the raid.
And to rebel against that lord's command
His Zealand stirred; nor he the war delayed,
Until by him Bireno's blood was spilt:
A punishment that ill atoned his guilt.

Oberto takes to wife Olympia fair,
And her of countess makes a puissant queen.
But be the paladin again our care,
Who furrows, night and day, the billows green,
And strikes his sails in the same harbor where
They to the wind erewhile unfurled had been.
All armed, he on his Brigliadoro leaps,
And leaves behind him wind and briny deeps.

CANTO IX

Had Roland of Eleusis' deity
The sovereign power possessed no less than will,
He for Angelica had land and sea
Ransacked, and wood and field, and pool and rill,
Heaven, and Oblivion's bottom; but since he
Had not, his pressing purpose to fulfil,
Her dragons and her car, the unwearied knight
Pursued the missing maid as best he might.

Through France he sought her, and will seek her through
The realms of Italy and of Almayn,
And thence through the Castiles, both old and new,
So passing into Libya out of Spain.
While bold Orlando has this plan in view,
He hears, or thinks he hears, a voice complain:
He forward spurs, and sees on mighty steed
A warrior trot before him on the mead,

Who in his arms a captive damsel bears,
Sore grieving, and across the pommel laid;
She weeps and struggles, and the semblance wears
Of cruel woe, and ever calls for aid
Upon Anglantes' prince; and now appears
To him, as he surveys the youthful maid,
She for whom, night and day, with ceaseless pain,
Inside and out, he France had searched in vain.

I say not is, but that she to the sight
Seems the Angelica he loves so dear.
He who his lady-love and goddess' flight
Beholds borne off in such afflicted cheer,
Impelled by fury foul, and angry spite,
Calls back with horrid voice the cavalier;
Calls back the cavalier, and threats in vain,
And Brigliadoro drives with flowing rein.

That felon stops not, nor to him replies,
On his great gain intent, his glorious prey;
And with such swiftness through the greenwood hies,
Wind would not overtake him on his way.
The one pursues while him the other flies,
And with lament resounds the thicket gray.
They issue in a spacious mead, on which
Appears a lofty mansion, rare and rich.

Of various marbles, wrought with subtle care,
Is the proud palace. He who fast in hold
Bears off upon his arm the damsel fair,
Sore pricking, enters at a gate of gold.
Nor Brigliador is far behind the pair,
Backed by Orlando, angry knight and bold.
Entering, around Orlando turns his eyes,
Yet neither cavalier nor damsel spies.

He suddenly dismounts, and thunderingly fares
Through the inmost palace, seeking still his foe,
And here and there in restless rage repairs,
Till he has seen each bower, each galleried row;
With the same purpose he ascends the stairs,
Having first vainly searched each room below.
Nor spends less labor, on his task intent,
Above, than he beneath had vainly spent.

While Roland wanders round the sylvan hall,
Still holding close his visage to the ground,
To see if recent print or trace withal
Can, right or left, upon the turf be found,
He from a neighboring window hears a call,
And looks, and thinks he hears that voice's sound,
And thinks he sees the visage by which he
Was so estranged from what he wont to be.

He thinks he hears Angelica, and she
"Help, help!" entreating cries, and weeping sore.
More than for life and soul, alas! for thee
Protection for my honor I implore.
Then shall it in my Roland's presence be
Ravished by this foul robber? Oh, before
Me to such miserable fate you leave
Let me from your own hand my death receive!"

These words repeated once and yet again.
Made Roland through each chamber, far and near,
Return with passion, and with utmost pain;
But tempered with high hope. Sometimes the peer
Stopt in his search, and heard a voice complain,
Which seemed to be Angelica's: if here
The restless warrior stand, it sounds from there,
And calls for help he knows not whence nor where.

Returning to Rogero, left, I said,
When through a gloomy path, upon his steed,
Following the giant and the dame who fled,
He from the wood had issued on the mead;
I say that he arrived where Roland dread
Arrived before him, if I rightly read.
The giant through the golden portal passed,
Rogero close behind, who followed fast.

After four times or five he too had wound
Above, below, through bower and gallery fair,
He yet returned, and, having nothing found,
Searched even to the space beneath the stair.
At length, in hope they in the woodlands round
Might be, he sallied; but the voice, which there
Roland recalled, did him no less recall,
And made as well return within the hall.

One voice, one shape, which to Anglantes' peer
Seemed his Angelica, beseeching aid,
Seemed to Rogero Dordogne's lady dear,
Who him a truant to himself had made:
If with Gradasso, or with other near
He spake, of those who through the palace strayed,
To all of them the vision, seen apart,
Seemed that which each had singly most at heart.

This was a new and an unwonted spell,
Which the renowned Atlantes had composed,
That in this toil, this pleasing pain, might dwell
So long Rogero, by these walls enclosed,
From him should pass away the influence fell,
Influence which him to early death exposed.
Though vain his magic tower of steel, and vain
Alcina's art, Atlantes plots again.

But to Angelica return we, who
Now of that ring so wondrous repossessed
(Which in her mouth, concealed the maid from view
Preserved from spell when it the finger pressed)
Was in the mountain-cavern guided to
Whatever needed, viands, mare, and vest,
And had conceived the project to pursue
Her way to her fair Indian realm anew.

She enters, hidden from the enchanter's eyes,
And by the ring concealed, examines all;
And Roland there, and Sacripant espies,
Intent to seek her vainly through that hall;
And with her image cheating both, descries
Atlantes old. The damsel doubts withal
Which of the two to take, and long revolves
This in her doubtful thought, nor well resolves.

Ferrau and Roland came upon the maid;
For one and the other champion equally
Within the palace and without it strayed
In quest of her, who was their deity.
And now, no longer by the enchantment stayed,
Each ran alike toward the dame, for she
Had placed the ring upon her hand anew,
Which old Atlantes' every scheme o'erthrew.

Upon the enchanted dome lay such a spell,
That they from one another were concealed;
They doffed not, night nor day, the corslet's shell,
Nor sword, nor even put aside the shield.
Saddled, with bridle hanging at the sell,
Their steeds were feeding, ready for the field,
Within a chamber, near the palace door,
With straw and barley heaped in plenteous store.

Nor might nor mean in old Atlantes lies
To stop the knights from mounting. who repair
To their good steeds, to chase the bright black eyes,
The fair vermilion cheeks and golden hair
Of the sweet damsel, who before them flies,
And goads to better speed her panting mare;
Ill pleased the three assembled to discern,
Though haply she had taken each in turn.

And when these from the magic palace she
Had ticed so far that she no more supposed
The warriors to the wicked fallacy
Of the malign enchanter were exposed,
The ring, which more than once from misery
Had rescued her, she 'twixt her lips enclosed,
Hence from their sight she vanished in a thought.
And left them wondering there, like men distraught.

Although she first the scheme had entertained
Roland or Sacripant to have released,
To guide her thither, where her father reigned,
King Galaphron, who ruled i' the farthest East,
The aid of both she suddenly disdained,
And in an instant from her project ceased;
And deemed, without more debt to count or king.
In place of either knight sufficed the ring.

In the mid wood where they the maid did lose,
Was but a single pathway, left or right,
Which they believed the damsel could not choose
But follow when she vanished from their sight.
Ferrâu halts not, and Roland fast pursues,
Nor Sacripant less plies the rowels bright.
Angelica, this while, restrains her steed,
And follows the three warriors with less speed.

When pricking thus they came to where the way
Was in the forest lost, with wood o'ergrown,
And had begun the herbage to survey,
For print of recent footsteps, up and down,
The fierce Ferrau, who might have borne away
From all that ever proudest were, the crown,
With evil countenance, to the other two
Turned him about, and shouted, "Whence are you?

"Turn back or take another road, save here,
In troth, you covet to be slain by me.
Nor when I chase or woo my lady dear,
Let any think I bear with company?"
And "What more could he say, Sir cavalier,"
Orlando cried to Sacripant, "if we
Were known for the two basest maids that pull
And reel from spindle-staff the matted wool?"

Then turning to Ferrau, "But that thine head,
Thou brutish sot, as I behold, is bare,
If thy late words were ill or wisely said
Thou shouldst perceive, before we further fare."
To him Ferrau. "For that which breeds no dread
In me, why shouldst thou take such sovereign care?
What I have said unhelmed will I prove true,
Here, single as I am, on both of you."

"Oh!" to Circassia's King cried Roland dread,
"Thy morion for this man let me entreat,
Till I have driven such folly from his head;
For never with like madness did I meet."
"Who then would be most fool?" the monarch said;
"But if indeed you deem the suit discreet,
Lend him thine own; nor shall I be less fit
Haply than thee to school his lack of wit."

"Fools, both of you!" the fierce Ferrau replied,
"As if, did I to wear a helm delight,
You would not be without your casques of pride.
Already reft by me in your despite;
But know thus much, that I by vow am tied
To wear no helm, and thus my promise quite;
Roaming without, till that fine casque I win
Worn by Orlando, Charles's paladin."

"Then," smiling, to the Spaniard said the Count,
"With naked head, thou thinkest to repeat
On Roland what he did in Aspramont,
By Agolant's bold son. But shouldst thou meet
The warrior whom thou seekest, front to front,
I warrant thou wouldst quake from head to feet;
Nor only wouldst forego the casque, but give
The knight thine other arms to let thee live."

"So oft have I had Roland on the hip,
"And oft," exclaimed the boaster, "heretofore,
From him it had been easy task to strip
What other arms, beside his helm, he wore;
And if I still have let the occasion slip,
We sometimes think of things unwished before:
Such wish I had not; I have now; and hope
To compass easily my present scope."

The good Orlando could no more forbear,
And cried, "Foul miscreant, liar, matched with me.
Say, caitiff, in what country, when and where
Boast you to have obtained such victory.
That paladin am I, o'er whom you dare
To vaunt, and whom you distant deemed. Now see
If you can take my helm, or I have might
To take your other arms in your despite.

"Nor I o'er you the smallest vantage would,"
He ended, and his temples disarrayed,
And to a beech hung up the helmet good,
And nigh as quickly bared his trenchant blade.
Ferrau stands close, and in such attitude
(His courage not for what had chance dismayed)
Covered with lifted shield and naked sword,
As might best shelter to his head afford.

'Twas thus those warriors two, with falchions bare,
Turning their ready steeds, began to wheel;
And where the armor thinnest was, and where
The meeting plates were joined, probed steel with steel;
Nor was there in the world another pair
More fitted to be matched in fierce appeal:
Equal their daring, equal was their might,
And safe alike from wound was either knight.

By you, fair sir, already, I presume,
That fierce Ferrau was charmed is understood.
Save where the child, enclosed within the womb
Of the full mother, takes its early food;
And hence he ever, till the squalid tomb
Covered his manly face, wore harness good
(Such was his wont) the doubtful part to guard,
Of seven good plates of metal, tempered hard.

Alike a charmed life Orlando bore,
Safe everywhere, except a single part:
Unfenced beneath his feet, which evermore
By him were guarded with all care and art.
The rest than diamond dug from mountain hoar
More hard, unless report from truth depart;
And armed to battle either champion went,
Less for necessity than ornament.

Waxing more fierce and fell the combat rages,
Of fear and horror full, between the twain;
The fierce Ferrau such dreadful battle wages,
That stroke or thrust is never dealt in vain.
Each mighty blow from Roland disengages
And loosens, breaks, or shatters plate and chain.
Angelica alone, secure from view,
Regards such fearful sight, and marks the two.

For, during this, the King of Circassy,
Who deemed Angelica not far before,
When Ferrau and Orlando desperately
Closing in fight were seen, his horse did gore,
Along the way by which he deemed that she
Had disappeared; and so that battle sore
Was witnessed 'twixt the struggling foes, by none,
Besides the daughter of King Galaphron.

After the damsel had sometime descried
This dread and direful combat, standing nigh;
And it appearing that on either side
With equal peril both the warriors vie,
She, fond of novelty, the helm untied
Designs to take; desirous to espy
What they would do when they perceived the wrong;
But without thought to keep her plunder long.

To give it to Orlando was she bent,
But first she would upon the warrior play.
The helmet she took down with this intent
And in her bosom hid, and marked the fray;
Next thence, without a word to either, went
And from the scene of strife was far away
Ere either of the two had marked the feat;
So were they blinded by their angry heat.

But Ferrau, who first chanced the loss to see,
From Roland disengaged himself, and cried,
"How like unwary men and fools are we
Treated by him, who late with us did ride!
What meed, which worthiest of the strife might be,
If this be stolen, the victor shall abide?"
Roland draws back, looks upward, and with ire,
Missing the noble casque, is all on fire:

And in opinion with Ferrau agreed,
That he, the knight who was with them before,
Had borne away the prize; hence turned his steed,
And with the spur admonished Brigliador.
Ferrau, who from the field beheld him speed,
Followed him, and when Roland and the Moor
Arrived where tracks upon the herbage green
Of the Circassian and the maid were seen,

Toward a vale upon the left the Count
Went off, pursuing the Circassian's tread;
The Spaniard kept the path more nigh the mount,
By which the fair Angelica had fled.
Angelica, this while, has reached a fount
Of pleasant site and shaded overhead;
By whose inviting shades no traveler hasted,
Nor ever left the crystal wave untasted.

Angelica the sylvan spring beside
Reposes, unsuspicious of surprise;
And thinking her the sacred ring will hide,
Fears not that evil accident can rise.
On her arrival at the fountain's side,
She to a branch above the helmet ties;
Then seeks the fittest sapling for her need,
Where, fastened to its trunk, her mare may feed.

The Spanish cavalier the stream beside
Arrived, who had pursued her traces there.
Angelica no sooner him espied
Than she evanished clean, and spurred her mare;
The helm this while had dropt, but lay too wide
To be recovered of the flying fair.
As soon as sweet Angelica he saw,
Toward her full of rapture sprang Ferrau.

She disappeared, I say, as forms avaunt
At sleep's departure. Toiling long and sore
He seeks the damsel there, 'twixt plant and plant,
Nor can his wretched eyes behold her more.
Blaspheming his Mahound and Termagant,
And cursing every master of his lore,
Ferrau returned toward the sylvan fount,
Where lay on earth the helmet of the Count.

This he soon recognized, for here he read
Letters upon the margin, written fair,
Which how Orlando won the helmet said;
And from what champion took, and when and where.
With it the paynim armed his neck and head,
Who would not for his grief the prize forbear—
His grief for loss of her, conveyed from sight,
As disappear the phantoms of the night.

When in this goodly casque he was arrayed,
He deemed nought wanting to his full content,
But the discovery of the royal maid,
Who like a flash of lightning came and went.
For her he searches every greenwood shade,
And when all hope of finding her is spent,
He for the vain pursuit no longer tarries,
But to the Spanish camp returns near Paris;

Tempering the grief that glowed within his breast,
For such sore disappointment, with the thought
That he was with Orlando's morion blest,
As sworn. By good Anglante's count, when taught
That the false Saracen the prize possest,
Long time the Spanish knight was vainly sought;
Nor Roland took the helmet from his head,
Till he between two brigands laid him dead.

Angelica thus, viewless and alone,
Speeds on her journey, but with troubled front;
Grieved for the helmet, in her haste foregone
On her departure from the grassy fount.
"Choosing to do what I should least have done,"
She said, "I took his helmet from the Count.
This for his first desert I will bestow;
A worthy recompense for all I owe!

"With good intentions, as God knows, I wrought;
Though these an ill and different end produce;
I took the helmet only with the thought
To bring that deadly battle to a truce.
And not that this foul Spaniard what he sought
Should gain, or I to his intent conduce."
So she, lamenting, took herself to task
For having robbed Orlando of his casque.

By what appeared to her the meetest way,
Moody and ill-content she eastward pressed;
Ofttimes concealed, sometimes in face of day,
As seemed most opportune and pleased her best.
After much country seen, a forest gray
She reached, where, sorely wounded in mid breast,
Between two dead companions on the ground,
The royal maid a bleeding stripling found.

But of Angelica I now no more
Shall speak, who first have many things to say;
Nor shall to the Circassian or the Moor
Give for long space a rhyme; thence called away
By good Anglantes' Prince, who wills, before
I of those others tell, I should display
The labors and the troubles he sustained,
Pursuing the great good he never gained.

At the first city whither he was brought
(Because to go concealed he had good care),
He a new helmet donned; but took no thought
What was the head-piece he designed to bear.
So safe is he in fairy spell, it nought
Imports if hard or soft its temper were.
Orlando, covered thus, pursues the quest,
Nor him day, night, or rain, or sun arrest.

It was the hour that out of Ocean's bed
Dan Phœbus drew his dripping steeds, and high
And low, still scattering yellow flowers and red,
Aurora stained the heavens with various dye,
And stars had cast their veils about their head,
Departing from their revels in the sky;
When passing on a day fair Paris near,
Orlando made his mighty worth appear.

Two squadrons he encountered; one an old
Saracen, Manilardo clept, obeyed;
King of Noritia whilom fierce and bold,
But fitter now to counsel than to aid.
The next beneath the standard was enrolled
Of Tremisena's monarch, who was said
'Mid Africans to be a perfect knight;
Alzirdo he by those who knew him hight.

These, with the other Saracen array,
Cantoned throughout the winter months had lain,
Some near the city, some more far away,
All lodged nigh town or hamlet on the plain.
For since King Agramant had many a day
Spent in attacking Paris' walls in vain,
He (for no other means remained to try)
Would lastly with a siege the city ply.

The quivering brook as warmer breezes blew,
Beginning now from ice its waves to free,
And the fresh springing grass and foliage new,
To clothe again the field and greenwood tree,
All those King Agramant assembled, who
Had followed him in his prosperity;
To muster in review the armed swarm,
And give to his affairs a better form.

Hence did the King of Tremisen repair,
With him who had Noritia in command,
To be in time at that full muster, where
Each squadron, good or bad, was to be scanned.
Orlando thus by chance encountered there,
As I have told you, this united band;
Who, as his usage was, went seeking her,
By whom he had been made Love's prisoner.

Alzirdo, as the approaching Count he eyes,
Who in this world for valor has no peer,
With such a haughty front and in such guise,
The God of War would less in arms appear,
The features known before astounded spies,
The fierce, disdainful glance and furious cheer;
And him esteems a knight of prowess high,
Which, fondly, he too sore desires to try.

Arrogant, young, and of redoubted force
Alzirdo was, and prized for dauntless mind;
Who bent to joust pricked forth his foaming horse,
Happier had he remained in line behind!
Met by Anglantes' Prince in middle course,
Who pierced his heart as they encountering joined.
Frighted, the lightened courser scoured the plain,
Without a rider to direct the rein.

Rises a sudden and a horrid cry,
And air on every side repeats the scream;
As his scared band the falling youth descry,
And issuing from his wound so wide a stream:
Disordered, they the Count in fury ply,
And, raised to cut or thrust, their weapons gleam
Against that flower of knights, their feathered reeds,
A thicker squadron yet in tempest speeds.

At once spears, shafts, and swords his corslet bore
By thousands, and as many pierce his shield.
This threatens on one side, and that before,
And those the ponderous mace behind him wield.
But he esteems the craven rout no more,
He, who did never yet to terror yield,
Than hungry wolf in twilight makes account
To what the number of the flock may mount.

He held unsheathed that thundering sword in hand,
Which with so many foes has heaped the plain
That he who thinks to count the slaughtered band,
Has undertaken hard emprize and vain.
The road ran red, ensanguined by his brand,
And scarce capacious of the many slain.
For neither targe nor head-piece good defends
Where fatal Druindana's blade descends.

Nor safety cotton vest nor cloths supply,
In thousand folds about the temples spread:
Nor only groan and lamentation fly
Through air, but shoulder, arm, and severed head.
Death roams the field in strange variety
Of horrid forms, and all inspiring dread;
And says, "For hundreds of my scythes may stand
His Durindana in Orlando's hand."

His ceaseless strokes scarce one the other wait:
  Speedily all his foemen are in flight.
And when before they came at furious rate,
  They hoped to swallow quick the single knight.
None is there who, in that unhappy strait,
  Stops for his comrade, flying from the fight.
Here one man speeds afoot, one gallops there;
None stays to question if the road be fair.

His mirror Valour bore about, and here
  Each blemish of the soul was seen confessed:
None looked therein, except an aged peer,
  Whose blood was chilled, but courage unrepressed;
That death were better deems this cavalier
  Than life in flight and in disgrace possessed:
I mean Noritia's King, who lays his lance
In rest against the paladin of France;

He broke it on the border of the shield
  Of the intrepid Count, with steadfast hand,
Who, by the stroke unshaken, nothing reeled.
  And smote the King, in passing, with his brand.
Him Fortune saved; for as Orlando wheeled
  The blade, it turned, descending, in his hand.
Although an-edge he guides not still the sword,
Stunned from his saddle reels the paynim lord.

Astounded from his saddle reels the King,
  Nor him Orlando turns about to see.
He cuts, and cleaves, and slays his following;
  Who all believe him at their backs to be
As through the spacious air, with troubled wing,
  The starlings from the daring merlin flee;
So, of that broken squadron, scattered round,
Some fly, some dip, and some fall flat to ground.

He ceased not his ensanguined blade to sway,
  Till living wight remained not in his view.
Orlando doubted to resume his way,
  Although the country all about he knew.
Does he the right or left-hand road assay,
  His thoughts still rove from what his steps pursue,
And he to seek the damsel is in dread
Through other path than that by which she fled.

Through wood and field his courser did he goad,
  Often inquiring for the royal dame;
Beside himself, he strayed beside his road,
  And to the foot of rising mountain came.
Whence (it was night-time) through a fissure glowed
  The distant flicker of a quivering flame.
Orlando to the rock approached, to spy
If there Angelica concealed might lie.

By day the grot was hidden evermore;
But the clear flame betrayed the haunt by night.
Its use he guessed, but would the place explore,
And better certify himself by sight.
When he without had tied his Brigliador,
In silence to the grotto stole the knight;
Threading the shrubs; nor calling for a guide,
Entered the passage in the mountain's side.

In the mid cave, beside a fire was seen
A gentle maid of pleasing look and guise,
Who seemed to Roland little past fifteen
As far as at first sight he might surmise,
With that so fair she made the rugged scene
Seem in the warrior's sight a paradise,
Although this while her eyes with tears o'erflow,
Clear tokens of a heart oppressed with woe.

An aged dame was with her, and the pair
Wrangled, as oftentimes is women's way;
But when the County was descended there,
Concluded the dispute and wordy fray.
Orlando hastens to salute them fair,
As still is due to womankind, and they
To welcome him rise lightly from their seat,
And with benign return the warrior greet.

'Tis true, that when that sudden voice they hear,
Some deal confused in look they seem to be,
At the same time beholding thus appear
So fierce a man, and harnessed cap-à-pie.
"What wight," demands Anglantes' cavalier,
"So barbarous is, and void of courtesy,
That he keeps buried, in this rude repair,
A face so gentle and so passing fair?"

With pain the virgin to the Count replies,
As he inquires of her unhappy doom,
In sweet and broken accents, which by sighs
Impelled, through rows of pearl and coral come;
And between rose and lily, from her eyes
Tears fall so fast she needs must swallow some.
In another canto, sir, be pleased to attend
The rest, for here 'tis time my strain should end.

CANTO X

"Though I am sure," she said, "O cavalier,
To suffer punishment for what I say;
Because I know, to him who pens me here,
This woman quickly will the fact display;
I would not but thou shouldst the story hear,
And let my wretched life the forfeit pay!
For what can wait me better than that he,
My gaoler, should one day my death decree?

"Lo! I am Isabel, who once was styled
The daughter of Galicia's hapless king:
I said aright who was, but now the child
(No longer his) of care and suffering:
The fault of Love, by whom I was beguiled;
For against him alone this charge I bring,
Who sweetly, at the first, our wish applauds,
And weaves in secret but deceit and frauds.

"My father in his city of Bayonne,
(To-day will be twelve months) a tourney dight;
Hence, led by spreading rumor to our town,
To joust, from different lands came many a knight,
Mid these (was it his manifest renown,
Or was it love which so deceived my sight)
Praise in my eyes alone Zerbino won,
Who was the mighty King of Scotland's son.

"When him I after in the field espied,
Performing wondrous feats of chivalry,
I was surprised by Love, ere I descried
That freedom was forever lost to me.
Yet, following in my love, so rash a guide,
I lay this unction to my phantasy,
That no unseemly place my heart possest,
Fixed on the worthiest in the world and best.

"In beauty and in valor's boast above
Those other lords the Scottish prince stood high.
He showed me, and, I think, he bore me love,
And felt no less an ardent flame than I.
Nor lacked there one who did between us move,
To speak our common wishes frequently,
So could we still in heart and mind unite,
Although disjoined from one another's sight.

"Hence, when concluded was the festal show,
And to his home Zerbino was returned,
If thou know'st what is love, thou well may'st know
How night and day I for the warrior yearned;
And was assured no less on him did prey
The flame that in his constant bosom burned.
He, save a way to have me with him, nought
For solace of his restless passion sought.

"For different faith forbade him (on my side
I was a Saracen, a Christian he)
To ask me of my father as a bride,
By stealth he purposed to elope with me.
Amid green fields, our wealthy town beside,
I had a garden, seated by the sea,
Upon the pleasant shore; from whence the eye
Might ocean and the hills about descry.

"A fitting place to effect what different creed
And law forbade us, he esteemed this site,
And showed the order taken for the deed,
Which was to make our future life's delight;
And how, near Santa Marta, for our need,
A bark was with arm'd men in ambush dight,
Under Sir Odoric of Biscay's command;
A leader he, approved by sea and land!

"Unable in his person this to do,
For by his father he was forced to wend
In succor of the King of France, in lieu
This Odoric for the purpose he would send;
Chosen, of all his faithful friends and true,
As his most faithful and his truest friend;
And such had been, if benefits could bind
And goodly deeds the friendship of mankind.

"At the time fixed to bear me thence away,
This chief would anchor on the destined ground,
And thus it was arrived the wished-for day,
When I of them was in my garden found.
Sir Odoric, at night, with fair array
Of valiant men, by land and sea renowned,
In the near river from his bark descends,
And thence in silence to my garden wends.

"To the pitched bark with me his party sped,
Before the city knew what was at hand;
Some of the house, disarmed and naked, fled,
And some were slain; while of the helpless band,
With me, another part was captive led.
So was I severed from my native land,
Hoping in brief Zerbino to possess,
I cannot tell thee with what happiness.

"Scarcely was Mongia by our galley doubled,
Ere a squall took us on the larboard side,
Which round about the clear horizon troubled,
And stirred and tossed heaven-high the foaming tide;
Smote with a northwest wind, next, ocean bubbled,
Which on her other beam the vessel plied.
This evermore increases, with such force,
Starboard or larboard, boots not which our course.

"It steads not to strike sail, nor lash the mast,
Lowered on the gang-board, nor our castles fell;
The bark, in our despite, is hurried fast
Toward the pointed rocks about Rochelle:
Save He above assist us at the last,
The cruel storm will us ashore impel;
Driven thither by ill wind with mightier speed
Than ever bow-string gave to whistling reed.

"Our peril well does the Biscayan note,
And tries what often has an evil end;
Lowers down the galley's skiff, and, when afloat,
Descends into it, and makes me descend.
Two follow, and a troop would throng the boat,
Did not the first prevent them, and defend
The entrance with their naked falchions; we
Sever the rope forthwith, and put to sea.

"Driven landward, on the shore we safely light
Who in the skiff embarked; while of our band
The rest in the split vessel sink outright,
Our goods sea-swallowed all. Upon the strand
To Eternal Love, to Goodness Infinite,
I offer up my thanks, with outstretched hand,
That I was doomed not 'mid the watery roar
To perish, nor behold Zerbino more.

"Though I had left on shipboard matters rare
And precious in their nature, gem and vest,
So I might hope Zerbino's lot to share,
I was content the sea should have the rest.
No dwelling on the beach appears, nor there
Is any pathway seen by footsteps prest;
Only a hill, whose woody top is beat
By ceaseless winds, the waters bathe its feet."

The gentle damsel then her tale pursues
While sobs and sighs oft interposing break
Her oft angelic voice, which might infuse
Compassion into asp, or venomed snake.
What time she so her piteous grief renews
Or haply does her bitter anguish slake,
Some twenty men the gloomy cavern fill;
This armed with hunting-spear, and that with bill.

With squinting look and dark, and but one eye,
The leader of the troop, of brutish cheer
Was he, the foremost of the company;
By a blow blinded, which from nose to ear
Had cleft his jaw; when he did so descry
Seated beside the maid, that cavalier,
He turned about and said, "Lo! in the net
Another bird for whom it was not set!"

Then to the County cried: "I never knew
A man more opportune my wants to stead;
I know not whether any one to you
Perchance may have announced my pressing need
Of such fair arms, or you conjectured true,
As well as of that goodly sable weed.
You verily arrived in season are
My needs (pursued the losel) to repair."

With bitter smile, upstarting on his feet,
Orlando to the ruffian made reply:
"Thou at a price at which no chapmen treat,
Unmarked in merchant's books, these arms shalt buy:"
With that he snatched a brand, which, full of heat
And smoke, was smouldering in the chimney nigh,
Threw it, and smote by chance the knave half blind,
Where with the nose the meeting brows confined.

The brand discharged by him hit either brow,
But most severely on the left did smite;
For that ill feature perished by the blow
Which was the thief's sole minister of light.
Nor is the stroke content to blind the foe;
Unsated, save it register his sprite
Among those damned souls, whom Charon keeps,
With their companions, plunged in boiling deeps.

A spacious table in mid cavern stood,
Two palms in thickness, in its figure square;
Propt on one huge, ill-fashioned foot and rude
Which held the thief and all who harbored there.
Even with such freedom as his dart of wood
We mark the nimble Spaniard launch through air,
The heavy table Roland seized and threw,
Where, crowded close together, stood the crew.

One had his belly crushed, and one his breast;
Another head or arm, or leg and thigh.
Whence some were slain outright, and maimed the rest,
While he who was least injured sought to fly.
'Tis so sometimes, with heavy stone oppressed,
A knot of slimy snakes is seen to lie,
With battered head and loins, where, winter done,
They lick their scales, rejoicing in the sun.

Those whom the board had little maimed or nought,
(Turpin says there were seven) in craven wise,
Their safety in their feet, yet vainly, sought;
For to the cavern's door Orlando hies.
And having them without resistance caught
Fast with a rope their hands behind them ties;
A rope that in the cavern on the ground,
Convenient for his purpose he had found.

He after drags them bound without the cave,
Where an old service-tree its shadow throws.
Orlando lops the branches with his glaive,
And hangs the thieves, a banquet for the crows.
Nor chain and crook for such a deed did crave:
For ready hooks the tree itself bestows,
To purge the world; where by the chin up-hung,
These, on the branches, bold Orlando strung.

The ancient woman, the assassin's friend,
Escapes when she perceives that all are dead,
And, threading that green labyrinth without end,
Laments, and plucks the hair from off her head,
By fear impelled, through paths that sore offend
Her feet, till she, beside a river's bed,
Encounters with a warrior—but to say
Who was the stranger champion I delay;

And turn to her who to the Count applied,
Praying he would not leave her there alone,
And vowed to follow whither he should guide.
Orlando her consoles in courteous tone;
And thence, when, with a wreath of roses tied
About her brows, and robed in purple gown,
On wonted journey white Aurora starts,
The paladin with Isabel departs.

Without encountering aught that might appear
Worthy of note, they wended many a day;
And finally the twain a cavalier,
As prisoner led, encountered by the way.
Who shall be told; but tale to you as dear
Now calls me from the beaten path away;
Of Aymon's daughter, whom I left above,
Languid and lost in all the pains of love.

The beauteous lady who desires in vain
Rogero should not his return delay,
Lies in Marseilles, from whence the paynim train
She harasses, nigh each returning day;
(What time they robbing aye, by hill and plain,
Scour fruitful Languedoc and Provence gay)
And the true duty executes aright
Of a sage leader and a valiant knight.

The time long past, she, lying in that place,
Had hoped that her Rogero would appear,
She, not beholding him in all that space,
Of many evil chances lived in fear.
One day, mid others that her woeful case
The lady wept alone, to her drew near
The dame, who with that healing ring made sound
The bosom rankling with Alcina's wound.

"Fear not for thy Rogero; he is well
"And safe," she cried, "and ever worships thee,
As wonted; but thy foe, that wizard fell,
Him yet again deprives of liberty.
And it behooves thee now to climb the sell,
Would'st thou possess him, and to follow me;
For if thou wendest with me, I will lead
Whither by thee Rogero shall be freed."

"As soon as thou," pursued the dame, "art near
The place where he has built the magic seat,
Resembling thy Rogero in his cheer
And every look, Atlantes thee shall meet,
And make himself by his ill art appear
As suffering from some stronger arm defeat;
That thou may'st aid him in the peril feigned,
And thus among those others be detained.

"Hard will it seem to slay, full well I know,
The wight in whom Rogero you descry;
But, for truth is not in the lying show,
Trust not to sight where magic blears the eye.
Fix, ere with me you to the forest go,
To change not when the traitorous foe is nigh;
For never shall with you Rogero wive,
If weakly you the wizard leave alive."

The valorous maid with the intent to slay
The false enchanter, on her plan decides,
Snatches her arms, and follows on her way
Melissa sage, in whom she so confides.
And thus, by fruitful field or forest gray,
Her by forced journeys that enchantress guides
And studies to beguile their weary course
Ever, as best she may, with sweet discourse:

"Oh! my best guide," exclaimed the damsel bold
To the weird woman that to aid her came,
"As thou hast many years before foretold
Men who shall glorify my race and name,
So now I pray thee, lady, to unfold
The praise and virtues of some noble dame,
If from my lineage any such shall rise."
To whom Melissa courteously replies:

"Chaste dames of thee descended I survey,
Mothers of those who wear imperial crown,
And mighty kings; the column and the stay
Of glorious realms and houses of renown.
And as thy sons will shine in arms, so they
Will no less fame deserve in female gown,
With piety and sovereign prudence graced,
And noble hearts, incomparably chaste."

When of the larger portion of her seed
The kind enchantress at full ease had told,
And oft and oft rehearsed, amid the rede,
What arts Rogero to the wizard's hold
Had drawn, Melissa halted near the mead
Where stood the mansion of Atlantes old,
Nor would approach the magic dome more nigh,
Lest her the false magician should espy.

And yet again advised the martial maid
(Counsel she had a thousand times bestowed)
Then left. Nor Bradamant through greenwood shade
More than two miles in narrow path had rode,
Before, by two fierce giants overlaid,
She saw a knight, who like Rogero showed,
So closely pressed, and laboring sore for breath,
That he appeared well nigh reduced to death.

When she beheld him in such perilous strait,
Who of Rogero all the tokens wore,
She quickly lost the faith she nourished late,
Quickly her every fair design forbore.
She weens Melissa bears Rogero hate,
For some new injury unheard before;
And with unheard-of hate and wrong, her foe
Would by her hand destroy who loves him so.

She cried, "And is not this Rogero, who
Aye present to my heart, is now to sight?
If 'tis not he whom I agnize and view.
Whom e'er shall I agnize or view aright?
Why should I others' judgment deem more true
Than the belief that's warranted by sight?
Even without eyes, and by my heart alone,
If he were near or distant, would be shown."

While so the damsel thinks, a voice she hears,
Which, like Rogero's, seems for aid to cry;
At the same time, the worsted knight appears
To slack the bridle and the rowels ply:
While at full speed the goaded courser clears
His ground, pursued by either enemy.
Nor paused the dame, in following them who sought
His life, till to the enchanted palace brought.

Of which no sooner has she passed the door
Than she is cheated by the common show.
Each crooked way or straight her feet explore
Within it and without, above, below;
Nor rests she night or day, so strong the lore
Of the enchanter, who has ordered so,
She (though they still encounter and confer)
Knows not Rogero, nor Rogero her.

But leave we Bradamant, nor grieve, O ye
Who hear, that she is prisoned by the spell,
Since her in fitting time I shall set free,
And good Rogero, from the dome as well.
As taste is quickened by variety,
So it appears that, in the things I tell,
The wider here and there my story ranges,
It will be found less tedious for its changes.

CANTO XI

In many a fierce assault and conflict dread,
'Twixt Spain and Afric and their Gallic foe,
Countless had been the slain, whose bodies fed
The ravening eagle, wolf, and greedy crow;
But though the Franks had worse in warfare sped,
Forced all the champaign country to forego,
This had the paynims purchased at the cost
Of more good princes and bold barons lost.

So bloody was the price of victory,
Small ground was left them triumphs to prepare;
And if, unconquered Duke Alphonso, we
May modern things with ancient deeds compare,
The battle, whose illustrious palm may be
Well worthily assigned to you to wear,
At whose remembrance sad Ravenna trembles,
And aye shall weep her loss, this field resembles.

When the Calesians and the Picards yielding,
And troops of Normandy and Aquitaine,
You, with your valiant arm their squadrons shielding,
Stormed the almost victorious flags of Spain.
And those bold youths their trenchant weapons wielding,
Through parted squadrons, followed in your train;
Who on that day deserved you should accord,
For honored gifts, the gilded spur and sword.

Noritia's men and Tremisene's alone
Were wanting to complete the paynim host;
But in the martial muster sign was none,
Nor tale, nor tiding of the squadrons lost;
To wondering Agramant alike unknown,
What kept the slothful warriors from their post,
When of King Tremisene's a squire was brought
Before him, who at large the mischief taught;

Who taught how Manilardo was laid low,
  Alzirdo, and many others, on the plain.
"Sir," said the bearer of the news, "the foe
  Who slew our troop, would all thy camp have slain.
If thine assembled host had been more slow
  Than I, who, as it was, escaped with pain.
This man slays horse and foot, as in the cote
The wolf makes easy waste of sheep and goat."

Where the bold Africans their standards plant,
  A warrior had arrived some days before;
Nor was there in the west, or whole Levant,
  A knight with heart or prowess gifted more.
To him much grace was done by Agramant,
  As successor of Agrican, who wore
The crown of Tartary, a warrior wight;
The son of famous Mandricardo hight.

Renowned he was for many a glorious quest
  Achieved, and through the world his fame was blown;
But him had glorified above the rest
  Worth in the Syrian fairy's castle shown;
Where mail, which cased the Trojan Hector's breast
  A thousand years before, he made his own.
And finished that adventure, strange and fell;
A story which breeds terror but to tell.

When the squire told his news amid that show
  Of troops, was present Agrican's bold son,
Who raised his daring face, resolved to go
  And find the warrior who the deed had done;
But the design he hatched, forbore to show;
  As making small account of any one,
Or fearing lest, should he reveal his thought,
The quest by other champion might be sought.

He of the squire demanded what the vest
  And bearings, which the valiant stranger wore;
Who answered, that he went without a crest,
  And sable shield and sable surcoat bore.
And, sir, 'twas true; for so was Roland drest,
  The old device renounced he had before:
For as he mounted within, so he without
The symbols of his grief would bear about.

Marsilius had to Mandricardo sped,
  As gift, a courser of a chestnut stain,
Whose legs and mane were sable; he was bred
  Between a Friesland mare and nag of Spain.
King Mandricardo, armed from foot to head,
  Leaped on the steed and galloped o'er the plain,
And swore upon the camp to turn his back
Till he should find the champion clad in black.

The King encounters many of the crew
Whom good Orlando's arm had put to flight;
And some a son, and some a brother rue,
Who in the rout had perished in their sight;
And in the coward's cheek of pallid hue
Is yet portrayed the sad and craven sprite:
Yet, through the fear endured, they far and nigh,
Pallid, and silent, and insensate fly.

Nor he long way had gone, ere he descried
A passing-cruel spectacle and sore;
But which the wondrous feats well testified,
That were recounted Agramant before.
Now on this hand, now that, the dead he eyed,
Measured their wounds, and turned their bodies o'er;
Moved by strange envy of the knight whose hand
Had strown the champaign with the slaughtered band.

That day, and half the next, in search he strayed
Of him who wore the sable vest and shield.
When lo! he saw a mead, o'ertopt with shade,
Where a deep river wound about the field,
With narrow space between the turns it made
Where'er from side to side the water wheeled.
Even such a spot as this with circling waves
Below Otricoli the Tiber laves.

Where this deep stream was fordable, he scanned
A crowd of cavaliers that armor bore:
And these the paynim questioned, who had manned,
With such a troop, and to what end, the shore?
To him replied the captain of the band,
Moved by his lordly air, and arms he wore,
Glittering with gold and jewels, costly gear,
Which showed him an illustrious cavalier.

"In charge," he said, "we of the daughter go
Of him our King, who fills Granada's throne,
Espoused by Rodomont of Sarza, though
To fame the tidings are as yet unknown.
And we, departing when the sun is low,
And the cicala hushed, which now alone
Is heard, shall bring her where her father keeps
I' the Spanish camp; meanwhile the lady sleeps."

He who for scorn had daffed the world aside,
Designs to see at once how able were
Those horsemen to defend the royal bride.
Committed by their sovereign to their care.
"The maid, by what I hear, is fair," he cried.
"Fain would I now be certified how fair;
Then me to her, or her to me convey,
For I must quickly wend another way."

"Thou needs art raving mad," replied in few
The chief, nor more. But with his lance in rest,
The Tartar monarch at the speaker flew,
And with the leveled spear transfixed his breast.
For the point pierced the yielding corslet through.
And lifeless he, perforce, the champaign prest.
The son of Agrican his lance regained,
Who weaponless without the spear remained.

Nor sword nor club the warlike Tartar bore,
Since when the Trojan Hector's plate and chain
He gained, because the falchion lacked, he swore
(To this obliged), nor swore the king in vain,
That save he won the blade Orlando wore,
He would no other grasp—that Durindane,
Held in high value by Almontes bold,
Which Roland bears, and Hector bore of old.

Great is the Tartar monarch's daring, those
At such a disadvantage to assay.
He pricks, with leveled lance among his foes,
Shouting in fury, "Who shall bar my way?"
Round and about him suddenly they close;
These draw the falchion, and those others lay
The spear in rest; a multitude he slew,
Before his lance was broken on the crew.

When this he saw was gone, the truncheon sound
And yet entire he took both hands between,
And with so many bodies strewed the ground
That direr havoc never yet was seen:
And as with that jaw-bone, by hazard found,
The Hebrew Samson slew the Philistine,
Crushed helm and shield; and often side by side,
Slain by the truncheon, horse and rider died.

When afterward he marks the entrance, free,
Left ill-secured, and without sentinel,
He, following prints (which had been recently
Marked on the mead), proceeds, amid the swell
Of loud laments, Granada's dame to see
If she as beauteous were as what they tell.
He wound his way 'mid corpses, where the wave,
Winding from side to side, a passage gave:

And in the middle of the mead surveyed
Doralice (such the gentle lady's name),
Who, at he root of an old ash tree laid,
Bemoaned her. Fast her lamentations came,
And tears, like plenteous vein of water, strayed
Into the beauteous bosom of the dame;
Who (so it from her lovely face appeared)
For others mourned, while for herself she feared.

Her fear increased when she approaching spied
Him foul with blood, and marked his felon cheer;
And piercing shrieks the very sky divide
Raised by herself and followers, in their fear.
For over and above the troop who guide
The fair Infanta, squire and cavalier,
Came ancient men and matrons in her train,
And maids, the fairest of Granada's reign.

When that fair face by him of Tartary
Is seen, which has no paragon in Spain,
Where amid tears (in laughter what were she?)
Is twisted love's inextricable chain,
He knows not if in heaven or earth he be;
Nor from his victory reaps other gain,
Than yielding up himself a thrall to her,
He knows not why, who was his prisoner.

Yet not so far his courtesy he strained,
That he would lose his labor's fruit, although
The royal damsel showed, who sorely plained,
Such grief as woman in despair can show.
He who the hope within him entertained
To turn to sovereign joy her present woe,
Would wholly bear her off; whom having placed
On a white jennet, he his way retraced.

He dames, maids, ancient men, and others, who
Had from Granada with the damsel fared,
Kindly dismissed, their journey to pursue,
Saying, "My care suffices; I of guard,
Of guide, of handmaid, will the office do
To serve her in her every need prepared.
Farewell!" and thus unable to withstand
The wrong, with tears and sighs withdrew the band.

The Tartar, joying in the prize possest,
Which he by chance and valor won and wore;
To find the warrior of the sable vest
Seemed not to have the haste he had before,
And stopp'd and loitered, where he whilom prest;
And cast about and studied evermore
To find some fitting shelter; with desire
In quiet to exhale such amorous fire.

Doralice he consoled this while, whose eyes
And cheek were wetted with the frequent tear,
And many matters feigned and flattering lies;
How, known by fame, he long had held her dear,
And how his country and glad realm, whose size
Shamed others, praised for grandeur far and near,
He quitted, not for sight of France or Spain,
But to behold that cheek of lovely grain.

"If a man merits love by loving, I
  Yours by my love deserve; if it is won
By birth—who boasts a genealogy
  Like me, the puissant Agricano's son?
By riches—who with me in wealth can vie,
  That in dominion yield to God alone?
By courage—I to-day, I ween, have proved
That I for courage merit to be loved."

These words, and many others on his part,
  Love frames and dictates to the Tartar knight,
Which sweetly tend to cheer the afflicted heart
  Of the unhappy maid, disturbed with fright.
By these fear first was laid, and next the smart
  Sheathed of that woe which had nigh pierced her sprite;
And with more patience thence the maid began
To hear, and her new lover's reasons scan.

Thence from one place to the other wandering, they
  Find themselves by a river, as they go,
Which to the sea in silence winds its way,
  And ill could be pronounced to stand or flow.
So clear and limpid that the cheerful day,
  With nought to intercept it, pierced below.
Upon its bank, beneath a cooling shade,
They found two warriors and a damsel laid.

Now lofty fancy, which one course to run
  Permits not, calls me hence in sudden wise;
And thither I return, where paynims stun
  Fair France with hostile din and angry cries,
About the tent, wherein Troyano's son
  The holy empire in his wrath defies,
And boastful Rodomont, with vengeful doom,
Gives Paris to the flames, and levels Rome.

Tidings had reached the Moorish sovereign's ear
  That the English had already passed the sea;
And he bade Garbo's aged king appear,
  Marsilius, and his heads of chivalry:
Who all advised the monarch to prepare
  For the assault of Paris. They may be
Assured they in the storm will never thrive,
Unless 'tis made before the aids arrive.

Innumerable ladders for the scale
  Had been collected upon every hand,
And plank and beam, and hurdle's twisted mail,
  For different uses at the King's command;
And bridge and boat; and what might more avail
  Than all the rest, a first and second band
For the assault (so bids the monarch) form;
Who will himself go forth with them that storm.

The Emperor, on the vigil of the day
Of battle, within Paris, everywhere,
By priest and friar of orders black and gray,
And white, bade celebrate mass-rite and prayer;
And those who had confessed, a fair array,
And from the Stygian demons rescued were,
Communicated in such fashion, all,
As if they were the ensuing day to fall.

Silence the advancing troop kept skirting round,
In front, and flank, and rear of the array;
Above the band he spread a mist profound,
And everywhere beside 'twas lightsome day;
Nor through the impeding fog the shrilling sound
Of horn was heard, without, or trumpet's bray.
He next the hostile paynims went to find,
And with I know not what made deaf and blind.

While with such haste his band Rinaldo led,
That him an angel well might seem to guide,
And in such silence moved that nought was said
Or heard of this upon the paynim side,
King Agramant his infantry had spread
Throughout fair Paris' suburbs, and beside
The foss, and underneath the walls; that day
To make upon the place his worst assay.

He who the Moorish monarch's force would tell,
Which Charlemagne this day will have to meet,
In wooded Apennine might count as well
The trees upon its back, or waves that beat
(What time the troubled waters highest swell)
Against the Mauritanian Atlas' feet;
Or watch at midnight with how many eyes
The furtive works of lovers Heaven espies.

The larum-bells, loud-sounding through the air,
Stricken with frequent blows, the town affray;
And in the crowded temples everywhere
Movements of lips and hands, upraised to pray
Are seen. If treasure seemed to God so fair
As to our foolish thoughts, upon this day
The holy consistory had bid mould
Their every statue upon earth in gold.

Lamenting may be heard the aged just,
In that they were reserved for such a woe;
Calling those happy that in sacred dust
Were buried many and many a year ago.
But the bold youths who, valiant and robust,
Small thought upon the approaching ills bestow,
Scorning their elders' counsel, here and there
Hurrying, in fury, to the walls repair.

The town, whose walls for miles in circuit run,
Might well have been attacked from many a side,
Yet, for he would assail it but on one,
Nor willingly his scattered troops divide,
Westward beyond the stream Troyano's son
Retired, from thence the assailing bands to guide.
In that, he neither city had nor plain
Behind but what was his, as far as Spain.

Where'er the walls of Paris wound about,
Large ammunition had King Charles purveyed;
Strengthening with dyke each quarter held in doubt,
And had within trench, drain and casemate made:
And where the river entered and went out,
Had thickest chains across the channel laid.
But most of all, his prudent cares appear
Where there is greatest cause for present fear.

With eyes of Argus, Pepin's valiant son
Where Agramant was bent to storm foresaw,
And everything forestalled, ere yet begun
By the bold followers of Mahound's law.
With Isolier, Grandonio, Falsiron,
Serpentin, Balugantes, and Ferrau,
And what beside he out of Spain had led,
Marsilius was in arms, their valiant head.

As swarming to assail the pastoral bowl,
With sound of stridulous wing, through summer sky,
Or relics of a feast, their luscious dole,
Repair the ready numbers of the fly;
As starlings to the vineyard's crimsoning pole
With the ripe clusters charged, heaven's concave high
Filling, as they advanced, with noise and shout,
Fast hurried to the storm the Moorish rout.

Upon their walls the Christians in array,
With lance, sword, ax and stone and wild-fire tost,
The assaulted city guard without dismay,
And little reck the proud barbarian's boast:
Nor when death snatches this or that away,
Does any one in fear refuse his post.
Into the foss below the paynim foes
Return, amid a storm of strokes and blows.

Nor in this war is iron plied alone,
But mighty masses and whole bulwarks fall,
And top of tower, huge piece of bastion,
And with much toil disrupted, solid wall;
While streams of boiling water pouring down,
Insufferably the advancing paynims gall:
An ill-resisted rain, which, in despite
Of helmet, makes its way, and blinds the sight.

And this than iron spear offended more:
Then how much more the mist of lime-dust fine!
Then how the emptied vessel, burning sore
With nitre, sulphur, pitch, and turpentine!
Nor idle lie the fiery hoops in store,
Which, wreathed about with flaming tresses, shine.
These at the foemen scaled, upon all hands,
From cruel garlands for the paynim bands.

With crimson Rodomont his banner stains,
And in the vermeil field a lion shows;
Who, bitted by a maid, to curb and reins
His savage mouth disdains not to unclose.
Himself in the submissive lion feigns
The haughty Rodomont, and would suppose
In her who curbs him with the bit and string,
Doralice, daughter to Granada's king;

Whom Mandricardo took, as I before
Related, and from whom, and in what wise.
Even she it was, whom Sarza's monarch more
Loved than his realm—beyond his very eyes;
And valor showed for her and courteous lore,
Not knowing yet she was another's prize.
If he had, then—then first—the story known,
Even what he did that day, he would have done.

At once the foes a thousand ladders rear,
Against the wall by the assailants shored,
Two manned each round; the second, in the rear,
Urged on the first; the third the second gored.
One mounts the wall through valor, one through fear,
And all attempt perforce the dangerous ford;
For cruel Rodomont, of Argier, slays
Or smites the wretched laggard that delays.

'Tis thus, 'mid fire and ruin, all assay
To mount the wall; but others to assure
Themselves, some safer passage seek, where they
Will have least pain and peril to endure.
Rodomont only scorns by any way
To wend, except by what is least secure;
And in that desperate case, where others made
Their offerings, cursed the god to whom they prayed.

Nor Rodomont to Nimrod yields in might,
Proud and untamed; and who would not forbear
To scale the lofty firmament till night,
Could he in this wide world descry the stair.
He stood not, he, to mark the bulwark's plight,
Nor if the fosse of certain bottom were.
He passed, ran—rather flew across the moat,
Plunging in filth and water to his throat.

Dripping and foul with water and with weeds,
'Mid fire and stone, and arbalests, and bows,
On drives the chief; as through the marshy reeds
The wild swine of our own Mallea goes;
Who makes large daylight wheresoe'er he speeds,
Parting the sedge with breast and tusk and nose.
The paynim, safe in buckler lifted high,
Scorns not the wall alone, but braves the sky.

Rodomont has no sooner gained the shore
Than on the wooden bartizan he stands,
Within the city walls, a bridge that bore
(Roomy and large) King Charles's Christian bands.
Here many a skull is riven, here men take more
Than monkish tonsure at the warrior's hands:
Heads fly and arms; and to the ditch a flood
Runs streaming from the wall of crimson blood.

He drops the shield; and with two-handed sway
Wielding his sword, Duke, Arnulph he offends,
Who came from whence, into the briny bay,
The water of the rapid Rhine descends.
No better than the sulphur keeps away
The advancing flame, the wretch his life defends.
He his last shudder gives, and tumbles dead;
Cleft downward a full palm from neck and head.

At one back-stroke Sir Spineloccio true,
Anselmo, Prando, and Oldrado fell;
The narrow place and thickly-swarming crew
Make the wide-circling blow so fully tell.
The first half Flemings were, the residue
Are Normans, who the list of slaughter swell.
Orghetto of Maganza, he from brow
To breast divides, and thence to paunch below.

Down from the wall Andropono and Moschine
He cast into the ditch: a priest the first;
The second, but a worshiper of wine,
Drained at a draught whole runlets in his thirst;
Aye wonted simple water to decline,
Like viper's blood or venom; now immersed
In this, he perishes amid that slaughter;
And, what breeds most affliction, dies by water.

Louis the Provençal is cleft in two;
Arnold of Toulouse through the breast before;
Hubert of Tours, Sir Dionysius, Hugh,
And Claude, pour forth their ghosts in reeking gore.
Odo, Ambaldo, Satallon ensue,
And Walter next; of Paris are the four—
With others that by me unmentioned fall,
Who cannot tell the name and land of all.

The crowd, by Rodomont of Sarza led,
The ladders lift, and many places scale.
Here the Parisians make no further head,
Who find their first defense of small avail.
Full well they know that danger more to dread
Within awaits the foemen who assail;
Because between the wall and second mound
A fosse descends, wide, horrid, and profound.

Besides that ours, with those upon the height,
War from below, like valiant men and stout,
New files succeed to those who fall in fight,
Where, on the interior summit, stand the rout,
Who gall with lances, and a whistling flight
Of darts, the mighty multitude without;
Many of whom, I ween, that post would shun,
If it were not for royal Ulien's son.

But he still heartened some, and chid the rest,
And forced them forward to their sore alarm.
One paynim's head he cleft, and other's breast,
Who turned about to fly; and of the swarm
Some shoved and pushed and to the encounter prest
Close-grappled by the collar, hair, or arm,
And downward from the wall such numbers threw,
The ditch was all too narrow for the crew.

While so the foes descend, or rather fling
Themselves into the perilous profound;
And thence by many ladders try to spring
Upon the summit of the second mound,
King Rodomont, as if he had a wing
Upon his every member, from the ground
Upraised his weight, and vaulted clean across,
Loaded with all his arms, the yawning fosse.

The moat of thirty feet, not less, he cleared,
As dextrously as leaps the greyhound fleet,
Nor at his lighting louder noise was heard
Than if he had worn felt beneath his feet.
He now of this, now that, the mantle sheared;
As if of pewter, not of iron beat,
Or rather of soft rind their arms had been:
So matchless was his force and sword so keen!

This while, not idle, those of ours had laid
Snares in the inner moat, a well-charged mine:
Where broom and thick fascines, all over paid
With swarthy pitch, in plenty intertwine.
Yet is not this by any eye surveyed,
Though they from bank to bank that hollow line,
Filling the bottom well-nigh to the brink;
And countless vessels the defenders sink,

Charged with saltpetre, oil, or sulphur pale,
One and the other, or with such-like gear;
While ours, intent the paynims that assail
The town, should pay their daring folly dear,
(Who from the ditch on different parts would scale
The inner bulwark's platform) when they hear
The appointed signal which their comrades raise,
Set, at fit points, the wildfire in a blaze.

For that the moat was full from side to side,
The scattered flames united into one,
And mounted to such height, they well-nigh dried
The watery bosom of the moon; a dun
And dismal cloud above extending wide,
Dimmed every glimpse of light, and hid the sun;
A fearful crash, with a continued sound,
Like a long peal of thunder, shook the ground.

A horrid concert, a rude harmony
Of deep lament, and yell and shriek, which came
From those poor wretches in extremity,
Perishing through their furious leader's blame,
Was heard, as in strange concord, to agree
With the fierce crackling of the murderous flame.
No more of this, no more!—Here, sir, I close
My canto, hoarse, and needing short repose.

CANTO XII

Thus was the paynim little skilled to do,
Who was but daring to his proper loss;
And to the moat impelled his meiny, who
One and all perished in the burning fosse.
The mighty gulf had not contained the crew,
But that, devouring those who sought to cross,
Them into dust the flame reduced, that room
Might be for all within the crowded tomb.

Of twenty thousand warriors thither sent,
Died nineteen thousand in the fiery pit,
Who to the fosse descended, ill content;
But so their leader willed, of little wit;
Extinguished amid such blaze and spent
By the devouring flame the Christians lit.
And Rodomont, occasion of their woes,
Exempted from the mighty mischief goes.

'Tis time that I should measure back my way
Thither where I Astolpho left of yore;
Who, in long exile, loathing more to stay,
Burned with desire to tread his native shore;
As hopes to him had given the sober fay,
Who quelled Alcina by her better lore,
She with all care would send the warrior back
By the securest and the freest track.

And thus by her a barque is fitted out;
A better galley never ploughed the sea;
And Logistilla wills, for aye in doubt
Of hindrance from Alcina's treachery,
That good Andronica, with squadron stout,
And chaste Sophrosina, with him shall be,
Till to the Arabian Sea, beneath their care,
Or to the Persian Gulf he safe repair.

Next, when she all in readiness espied,
Her license to depart the prudent fay
Accorded to the Duke, first fortified
With counsel as to things too long to say;
And that he might no more by charms be stayed
In place from whence he could not wend his way,
Him with a useful book and fair purveyed,
And ever for her love to wear it prayed.

How man should guard himself from magic cheats
The book instructed, which the fay bestowed;
At the end or the beginning, where it treats
Of such, an index and appendix showed.
Another gift, which in its goodly feats
All other gifts excelled, to her he owed;
This was a horn, which made whatever wight
Should hear its clang betake himself to flight.

I say, the horn is of such horrid sound,
That wheresoe'er 'tis heard, all fly for fear;
Nor in the world is one of heart so sound
That would not fly, should he the bugle hear.
Wind, thunder, and the shock that rives the ground,
Come not, in aught, the hideous clangor near.
With thanks did the good Englishman receive
The gift, and of the fairy took his leave.

Scouring at large broad ocean, with a guide
So faithful and secure, the cavalier
Questions Andronica, if from that side
Named from the westering sun, of this our sphere,
Bark which with oars or canvas stemmed the tide
On eastern sea was wonted to appear;
And could a wight that loosed from Indian strand
Reach France or Britain without touching land.

Andronica to England's Duke replies:
"Know that this earth is girt about with seas,
And all to one another yield supplies,
Whether the circling waters boil or freeze;
But, since the Æthiop's land before us lies,
Extending southward many long degrees,
Across his waters, some one has supposed
A barrier here to Neptune interposed.

"Hence bark from this Levant of Ind is none
Which weights to shape her course for Europe's shore;
Nor navigates from Europe any one,
Our Oriental regions to explore;
Fain to retrace alike the course begun
By the mid land, extending wide before;
Weening, its limits of such length appear,
That it must join another hemisphere.

"But in the course of circling years I view
From farthest lands that catch the western ray,
New Argonauts put forth, and Tiphys new
Opening till now an undiscovered way.
Others I see coast Afric, and pursue
So far the negroes' burning shore, that they
Pass the far sign, from whence, on his return,
The sun moves hither, leaving Capricorn;

"That this way should be hidden was God's will
Of old, and ere 'twas known long time should run;
Nor will he suffer its discovery, till
The sixth and seventh century be done.
And he delays his purpose to fulfil,
In that he would subject the world to one,
The justest and most fraught with prudent lore
Of emperors, since Augustus, or before.

Then of the victories, by land and main,
Which, when long course of years shall be complete,
Charles' worthy captains for their lord will gain,
Andronica did with Astolpho treat.
This, while now loosening, tightening now, the rein
On the eastern winds, which blow upon their fleet,
Making this serve or that, her comrades stand;
While the blasts rise or sink at her command.

This while they saw, as for their port they made,
How wide the Persian sea extends to sight;
Whence in few days the squadron was conveyed
Nigh the famed gulf from ancient Magi hight;
Here they found harborage: and here were stayed
Their wandering barks, which stern to shore were dight.
Secure from danger from Alcina's wrath,
The Duke by land continued hence his path.

Through Araby the blest he fares, where grow
Thickets of myrrh, and gums odòrous ooze,
Where the sole phœnix makes her nest, although
The world is all before her where to choose;
And to the avenging sea which whelmed the foe
Of Israël, his way the Duke pursues;
In which King Pharaoh and his host were lost;
From whence he to the land of heroes crost.

Astolpho along Trajan's channel goes,
Upon that horse which has no earthly peer,
And moves so lightly that the soft sand shows
No token of the passing cavalier;
Who prints not grass, prints not the driven snows,
Who dry-shod would the briny billows clear,
And strains so nimbly in the course, he wind
And thunderbolt and arrow leaves behind—

Erst Argalìa's courser, which was born
From a close union of the wind and flame,
And, nourished not by hay or heartening corn,
Fed on pure air, and Rabican his name.
His way the bearer of the magic horn
Following, where Nile received that river, came;
But ere he at its outlet could arrive,
Toward him saw a pinnace swiftly drive.

A hermit in the poop the bark did guide,
With snowy beard descending to mid breast;
Who when from far the paladin he spied
Him to ascend his ready pinnace prest.
"My son, unless thou loathest life," he cried,
"And wouldst that Death to-day thy course arrest,
Content thee in my bark to cross the water;
For yonder path conducts thee straight to slaughter.

"Within six miles, no farther, shalt thou light,"
Pursued the hermit, "on the bloody seat,
Where dwells a giant horrible to sight,
Exceeding every stature by eight feet;
From him wayfaring man or errant knight
Would vainly hope with life to make retreat;
For some the felon quarters, some he flays,
And some he swallows quick, and some he slays.

"He, 'mid the cruel horrors he intends,
Takes pleasure in a net, by cunning hands
Contrived, which near his mansion he extends;
So well concealed beneath the crumbling sands
That whoso uninstructed thither wends,
Nought of the subtle mischief understands;
And so the giant scares him with his cries,
That he within the toils in terror flies;

"Whom with loud laughter, to his seat hard by
He drags along, enveloped in his snare;
And knight and damsel views with equal eye,
And for his prisoners' worth has little care.
Then, having sucked their brains and life-blood dry,
Casts forth their bones upon the desert air;
And round about his griesly palace pins,
For horrid ornament, their bloody skins.

"Take this, my son, oh! take this other way,
Which thee will to the sea in safety guide."
"I thank thee, holy father, for thy say."
To him the fearless cavalier replied,
"But cannot peril against honor weigh,
Far dearer than my life. To the other side
Me vainly dost thou move to pass the wave;
Rather for this I seek the giant's cave.

"I with dishonor life to flight may owe;
But worse than death loathe thus to save my head.
The worst that can befall me if I go,
Is I my blood shall with the others shed;
But if on me such mercy God bestow
That I remain alive, the giant dead,
Secure for thousands shall I make the ways;
So that the greater good the risk o'erpays.

"I peril but the single life of one
Against the safety of the countless rest."
"Go then in peace," the other said, "my son,
And to thy succor, from among the blest,
May God despatch the Archangel Michael down."
And him, with that, the simple hermit blest.
Astolpho pricks along Nile's rosy strand,
More in his horn confiding than his brand.

Between the mighty river and the fen,
A path upon the sandy shore doth lie,
Barred by the giant's solitary den,
Cut off from converse with humanity.
About it heads and naked limbs of men
Were fixed, the victims of his cruelty.
Window or battlement was not whence strung
Might not be seen some wretched prisoner hung.

Caligorant was standing at the gate
(For so was the despiteous monster hight);
Who decked his house with corpses, as for state
Some theirs with cloth of gold and scarlet dight.
He scarce contained himself for joy, so great
His pleasure, when the Duke appeared in sight;
For 'twas two months complete, a third was near,
Since by that road had passed a cavalier.

ASTOLPHO, AS A SHOW THE THIEF WOULD BRING,
BY CITY, BOROUGH-TOWN, AND FARM CONVEYED

From an Engraving by Gustave Doré

Toward the marsh where verdant rushes grow
He hastes, intending from that covert blind
To double on his unsuspecting foe,
And issue on the cavalier behind;
For him to drive into the net, below
The sand, the griesly giant had designed;
As others trapped he had been wont to see,
Brought thither by their evil destiny.

When him the wary paladin espied
He stopt his courser, not without great heed,
Lest he into the covert snare might ride,
Forewarned of this by the good hermit's rede.
Here to his horn for succor he applied,
Nor failed its wonted virtue in this need;
It smote the giant's heart with such affright
That he turned back and homeward fled outright.

Astolpho blew, still watchful of surprise,
Weening to see the engine sprung. Fast flew
The giant, as if heart as well as eyes
The thief had lost, nor whitherward he knew;
Such is his fear, he kens not as he flies,
How his own covert mischief to eschew:
He runs into the net, which, closing round,
Hampers the wretch and drags him to the ground.

Astolpho, who beholds his bulky prey
Fall bodily, drives thither at full speed,
Secure himself, and, bent to make him pay
The price of slaughtered thousands, quits his steed.
Yet after deems a helpless wight to slay
No valor were, but rather foul misdeed;
For him, arms, neck, and feet so closely tied,
He could not shake himself, the warrior spied.

The net was fixed beneath the sandy plain,
In mode that all the travelers whom he chased
Ran into it, and the engine was with pain
Touched, ere it arms and feet and neck embraced.
From this the good Astolpho took a chain,
And with the gyve his hands behind his laced:
His arms and breast he swaddled in such guise,
He could not loose himself; then let him rise.

After, his other knots unfastening
(For he was turned more gentle than a maid),
Astolpho, as a show, the thief would bring,
By city, borough-town and farm conveyed;
The net as well, than which no quainter thing
Was ever by the file and hammer made.
On him, like sumpter-nag he laid the load
In triumph led behind him on his road.

Him helm and shield he gives alike to bear,
As to a valet; hence proceeds the peer,
Gladdening the fearful pilgrim everywhere,
Who joys to think henceforth his way is clear.
So far an end does bold Astolpho fare,
He is to Memphis' tombs already near—
Memphis renowned for pyramids; in sight,
He marks the populous Cairo opposite.

Ran all the people in tumultuous tide,
To see him drag the unmeasured wight along,
"How can it be," each to his fellow cried,
"That one so weak could master one so strong?"
Scarce can Astolpho put the press aside,
So close from every part their numbers throng;
While all admire him as a cavalier
Of mighty worth, and make him goodly cheer.

Then Cairo was not such as common cry
Pronounces in our age that costly seat:
That eighteen thousand districts ill supply
Lodging to those who in her markets meet;
And though the houses are three stores high,
Numbers are forced to sleep in the open street;
And that the soldan has a palace there
Of wondrous size, and passing rich and fair;

And therein (Christian renegadoes all)
Keeps fifteen thousand vassals for his needs,
Beneath one roof supplied with bower and stall,
Themselves, and wives, and families, and steeds.
The Duke desired to see the river's fall,
And how far Nile into the sea proceeds
At Damietta, where wayfaring wight,
He heard, was prisoner made, or slain outright.

For at Nile's outlet there, beside his bed,
A sturdy thief was sheltered in a tower,
Alike the native's and the stranger's dread,
Wont even to Cairo's gate the road to scour.
Him no one could resist, and it was said
That man to slay the felon had no power.
A hundred thousand wounds he had in strife
Received, yet none could ever take his life.

To see if he could break the thread that tied
The felon's life, upon his way the knight
Set forward, and to Damietta hied
To find Orrilo, so the thief was hight;
Thence to the river's outlet passed, and spied
The sturdy castle on the margin dight;
Harbored in which the enchanted demon lay,
The fruit of a hobgoblin and a fay.

He here Orrilo and two knights in mail
Found at fierce strife. The two ill held their own
Against him; so Orrilo did assail
The warlike pair, although himself alone;
And how much either might in arms avail,
Fame through the universal world had blown.
Of Oliviero's seed was either plant;
Gryphon the white, and sable Aquilant.

The necromancer had this while, to say
The truth, with vantage on his side, begun
The fight, who brought a monster to the fray,
Found only in those parts, and wont to won
Ashore or under water, and to prey,
For food, on human bodies; feeding on
Poor mariners and traveling men, who fare,
Of the impending danger unaware.

The monster, slaughtered by the brethren two,
Upon the sand beside the haven lies;
And hence no wrong they to Orrilo do,
Assailing him together in this guise.
Him they dismembered often, and not slew:
Nor he, because dismembered, ever dies;
For he replaces leg or hand like wax,
Which the good falchion from his body hacks.

Gryphon and Aquilant by turns divide,
Now to the teeth, now breast, the enchanted wight.
The fruitless blow Orrilo does deride,
While the two baffled warriors rage for spite.
Let him who falling silver has espied,
Which mercury by alchemists is hight,
Scatter and reunite each broken member,
Hearing my tale, what he has seen remember.

If the thief's head be severed by the pair,
He lights and staggers till he finds it; now,
Uptaken by the nose or by the hair,
And fastened to the neck, I know not how.
This sometimes Gryphon takes, and, whirled through air,
Whelms in the stream; but bootless is the throw;
For like a fish can fierce Orrilo swim,
And safely, with the head, regains the brim.

Two ladies, meetly clad in fair array,
One damsel was in black and one in white,
And who had been the occasion of that fray,
Stood by to gaze upon the cruel fight.
Either of these was a benignant fay,
Whose care had nourished one and the other knight,
Oliver's children, when the babes forlorn
They from the claws of two huge birds had torn.

Though it was noon in the happy islands, day
Had vanished in this clime, displaced by night;
And underneath the moon's uncertain ray,
And ill-discerned, were all things hid from sight;
When to the fort Orrilo took his way.
Since both the sable sister and the white
Were pleased the furious battle to defer,
Till a new sun should in the horizon stir.

The Duke, who by their ensigns, and yet more
Had by the sight of many a vigorous blow,
Gryphon and Aquilant long time before
Agnized, to greet the brethren was not slow;
And they, who in the peer, victorious o'er
The giant, whom he led a captive, know
The baron of the pard, so styled at court,
Him to salute, with no less love resort.

The ladies to repose the warriors led
To a fair palace near, their sumptuous seat;
Thence issuing courtly squire and damsel sped,
Them with lit torches in mid-way to meet.
Their goodly steeds they quit, there well bested,
Put off their arms, and in a garden sweet
Discern the ready supper duly laid
Fast by where a refreshing fountain played.

Here they bid bind the giant on the green,
Fast-tethered by a strong and weighty chain
To a tough oak, whose ancient trunk they ween
May well be proof against a single strain;
With that, by ten good sergeants overseen,
Lest he by night get loose, and so the train
Assault and haply harm, while careless they
Without a guard and unsuspecting lay.

Astolpho in his book had found exprest
That which preseribed a remedy for spell,
How he who of one hair deprived the pest,
Only could him in battle hope to quell;
But this plucked out or sheared, he from his breast
Perforce the felon's spirit would expel.
So says the volume, but instructs not where,
'Mid locks so thickly set, to find the hair.

The Duke no less with hope of conquest glows
Than if the palm he has already won;
As he that hopes with small expense of blows
To pluck the hair, the wizard-wight undone.
Hence does he to the youthful pair propose
The burden of that enterprise upon
Himself to take. Orrilo will he slay,
If the two brethren naught the intent gainsay.

But willingly to him these yield the emprize,
Assured his toil will be bestowed in vain;
And now a new Aurora climbs the skies,
And from his walls Orrilo on the plain
Drops, and the strife begins. Orrilo plies
The mace, the Duke the sword; he 'mid a rain
Of strokes would from the body at one blow
Divorce the spirit of the enchanted foe.

Together with the mace he lops the fist;
And now this arm, now the other, falls to ground;
Sometimes he cleaves the corslet's iron twist,
And piecemeal shears and maims the felon round.
Orrilo re-unites the portions missed,
Found on the champaign, and again is sound;
And, though into a hundred fragments hewed,
Astolpho sees him, in a thought, renewed.

After a thousand blows, Astolpho sped
One stroke, above the shoulders and below
The chin, which lopt away both helm and head;
Nor lights the Duke less swiftly than his foe,
Then grasps the hair defiled with gore and red,
Springs in a moment on his horse, and lo!
Up-stream with it along Nile's margin hies,
So that the thief cannot retake the prize.

That fool, who had not marked the warrior's feat,
Was searching in the dust to find his head;
But when he heard the charger in retreat,
Who through the forest with the plunder fled,
Leapt quickly into his own courser's seat,
And in pursuit of bold Astolpho sped.
Fain had Orrilo shouted "Hola! stay!"
But that the Duke had borne his mouth away.

Yet, pleased Astolpho had not in like guise
Borne off his heels, pursues with flowing rein.
Him Rubican, who marvelously flies,
Distances by a mightly length of plain.
This while the wizard's head Astolpho eyes
From poll to front, above the eyebrows twain,
Searching, in haste, if he the hair can see
Which makes Orrilo's immortality.

Amid innumerable locks, no hair
Straighter or crisper than the rest was seen.
How then should good Astolpho, in his care
To slay the thief, so many choose between?
"To cut them all," he said, "it better were."
And since he scissors lacked and razor keen,
He, wanting these, resorted to his glaive,
Which cut so well it might be said to shave;

And holding by the nose the severed head,
Close-sheared it all, behind and eke before.
He found, among the rest, the fatal thread.
Then pale became the visage, changing sore,
Turned up its eyes, and signals sore and dread
Of the last agony of nature wore;
And the headless body seated in the sell,
Shuddered its last, and from the courser fell.

When to the castellan was certified
In Damietta, that the thief was dead,
He loosed a carrier-pigeon, having tied
Beneath her wing a letter by a thread.
She went to Cairo; and, to scatter wide
The news, another from that town was sped
(Such is the usage there); so, Egypt through
In a few hours, the joyful tidings flew.

As he had brought the adventure to an end,
The Duke now sought the noble youths to stir,
(Though of themselves that way their wishes tend,
Nor they to whet that purpose need the spur)
That they the Church from outrage to defend,
And rights of Charles, the Roman Emperor,
Would cease to war upon that Eastern strand,
And would seek honor in their native land.

Gryphon and Aquilant thus bid adieu,
One and the other, to his lady fair;
Who, though it sorely troubled them, ill knew
How to resist the wishes of the pair.
The Duke, together with the warlike two,
Turns to the right, resolved to worship, where
God erst incarnate dwelt, the holy places,
Ere he to cherished France his way retraces.

The warriors to the left-hand might incline,
As plainer and more full of pleasant cheer,
Where still along the sea extends their line;
But take the right-hand path, abrupt and drear;
Since the chief city of all Palestine,
By six days' journey, is, through this, more near.
Water there is along this rugged track,
And grass; all other needful matters lack.

They, at the entrance of the city, view
A gentle stripling; and in him the three
Agnize Sir Sansonet of Mecca, who
Was, in youth's flower, for sovereign chivalry,
For sovereign goodness, famed the country through,
And wise beyond his years: from paganry
Converted by Orlando to the truth,
Who had, with his own hands, baptized the youth.

Designing there a fortilage, in front
Of Egypt's caliph they the warrior found;
And with a wall two miles in length, the mount
Of Calvary intending to surround.
Received with such a countenance, as is wont
To be of inward love the surest ground,
Them he conducted to his royal home,
And, with all comfort, harbored in the dome.

As deputy, the sainted land he swayed,
Conferred on him by Charlemagne, in trust.
To him the English Duke a present made
Of that so sturdy and unmeasured beast,
That it ten draught-horse burdens had conveyed,
So monstrous was the giant and robust.
Astolpho gave the giant, and next gave
The net, in which he took the unwieldy slave.

While grace the warlike three devoutly sought,
Intent on pardon and on pious lore,
A Grecian pilgrim, known to Gryphon, brought
Tidings, which ill the afflicted champion bore,
From his long-cherished vow and former thought,
Too foreign, too remote; and these so sore
Inflamed his troubled breast, and bred such care,
They wholly turned aside his mind from prayer.

For his misfortune, one of lovely feature
Sir Gryphon worshiped, Origilla hight.
Of fairer visage and of better stature,
Not one among a thousand meets the sight:
But faithless, and of such an evil nature,
That thou mightst town and city search outright,
And continent and island, far and near,
Yet never, as I think, wouldst find her peer.

In Constantine's imperial city, burned
With a fierce fever, he had left the fair;
And hoped to find her, to that place returned,
Lovelier than ever; and enjoy her there.
But she to Antioch, as the warrior learned,
Had with another leman made repair;
Thinking, while such fresh youth was yet her own,
'Twere not a thing to brook—to sleep alone.

It therefore is his purpose, without say
To Aquilant, alone to take the quest
As far as Antioch, and bear her away,
Who had borne off his heart-core from his breast:
To find him, who had made the dame his prey,
And take such vengeance of him, ere he rest,
As shall for aye be told. My next will tell
How he effected this, and what befel.

CANTO XIII

Resuming the fair history, I say,
Out of the city he in secret rode;
Nor to his brother would his plan bewray,
Who oft on him had vain reproof bestowed:
But to the left t'ward Ramah shaped his way,
By the most level and most easy road.
Him six days' journey to Damascus brought,
Whence, setting out anew, he Antioch sought.

He nigh Damascus met the lover, who
Perfidious Origilla's heart possest,
And matched in evil customs were the two,
Like stalk and flower; for that in either's breast
Was lodged a fickle heart; the dame untrue,
And he a traitor whom she loved the best.
While both the lovers hid their nature base,
To others' cost, beneath a courteous face.

As I relate to you, the cavalier
Came on huge courser, trapped with mickle pride;
With faithless Origilla, in gorgeous gear,
With gold embroidered, and with azure dyed,
Two ready knaves, who serve the warrior, rear
The knightly helm and buckler at his side;
As one who with fair pomp and semblance went
Toward Damascus, to a tournament.

Damascus' King a splendid festival
Had in these days bid solemnly proclaim;
And with what pomp they could, upon his call,
Thither, in shining arms, the champions came.
At Gryphon's sight the lady's spirits fall,
Who fears that he will work her scathe and shame;
And knows her lover has not force and breath
To save her from Sir Gryphon, threatening death.

But like most cunning and audacious quean,
Although she quakes from head to foot with fear,
Her voice so strengthens, and so shapes her mien,
That in her face no signs of dread appear.
Having already made her leman ween
The trick devised, she feigns a joyous cheer,
Toward Sir Gryphon goes, and for long space
Hangs on his neck, fast-locked in her embrace.

She, after suiting with much suavity
The action to the word, sore weeping, cried:
"Dear lord, is this the guerdon due to me,
For love and worship? that I should abide
Alone, one live-long year, deprived of thee—
A second near—and yet upon thy side
No grief?—and had I borne for thee to stay,
I know not if I should have seen that day.

"When I from Nicosià thee expected
When thou wert journeying to the plenar court)
To cheer me—left with fever sore infected,
And in the dread of death—I heard report
That thou wert gone to Syria; and dejected
By that ill tiding, suffered in such sort,
I, all unable to pursue thy quest,
Had nigh with this right hand transfixt my breast.

"But Fortune, by her double bounty, shows
She guards me more than thou. Me to convey
She sent my brother here, who with me goes,
My honor safe in his protecting stay;
And this encounter with thee now bestows,
Which I above all other blessings weigh,
And in good time; for hadst thou longer stayed,
My lord, I should have died of hope delayed."

The wicked woman, full of sublety,
Worse than a fox in crafty hardihood,
Pursues, and so well shapes her history,
She wholly throws the blame on Gryphon good;
Makes him believe that other not to be
Her kin alone, but of her flesh and blood,
Got by one father, and so puts upon
The knight, that he less credits Luke and John.

Nor he the fraud of her, more false than fair,
Only forbore with just reproach to pay;
Nor only did the threatened stranger spare,
Who was the lover of that lady gay;
But deemed to excuse himself sufficient were,
Turning some portion of the blame away;
And as the real brother she profest,
Unceasingly the lady's knight carest;

And to Damascus, with the cavalier
Returned, who to Sir Gryphon made report,
That Syria's wealthy King, with sumptuous cheer,
Within that place would hold a splendid court;
And who, baptized or infidel, appear
There at his tourney, of whatever sort,
Within the city and without, assures
From wrong, for all the time the feast endures.

Yet I of Origilla's treachery
Shall not so steadfastly pursue the lore,
Who, famed not for one single perfidy,
Thousands and thousands had betrayed before,
But that I will return again to see
Two hundred thousand wretched men or more
Burned by the raging wildfire, where they spread,
About the walls of Paris, scathe and dread.

I left you where King Agramant prepared
To storm a gate, and to the assault was gone:
This he had hoped to find without a guard;
And work elsewhere to bar the way was none.
For there, in person, Charles kept watch and ward
With many, practised warriors every one;
Two Angelines, two Guidos, Angelier,
Avino, Avolio, Otho and Berlinghier.

The frequent darts a storm of hail appear,
Which from the city wall the Christians fling;
The deafening clamors put the heavens in fear,
Which from our part, and from that other, ring.
But Charles and Agramant must wait; for here
I of the Mars of Africa will sing,
King Rodomont, that fierce and fearful man,
That through the middle of the city ran.

I know not, sir, if you the adventure dread
Of that so daring Moor to mind recall,
The leader, who had left his people dead,
Between the second work and outer wall;
Upon whose limbs the ravening fire so fed,
Was never sight more sad!—I told withal,
How vaulting o'er that hindrance at a bound,
He cleared the moat that girt the city round.

When he was known the thickening crowd among,
By the strange arms he wore and scaly hide,
There, where the aged sires and feebler throng,
Listened to each new tale on every side;
Heaven-high groan, moan, and lamentation rung,
And loud they beat their lifted palms and cried:
While those who had the strength to fly aloof,
Sought safety not from house or temple's roof.

But this the cruel sword concedes to few,
So brandished by that Saracen robust;
And here, with half a leg dissevered, flew
A foot, there head divided from the bust:
This cleft across, and that behold him hew,
From head to hips, so strong the blow and just.
While, of the thousands wounded by the Moor,
Is none that shows an honest scar before.

Nor the impious King alone with human blood—
Lord of the impious he—his hand distains,
But even on walls so sorely vents his mood,
He fires fair houses, and polluted fanes.
The houses almost all were made of wood
Then (as 'tis told), and this, by what remains.
May be believed; for yet in Paris we
Six out of ten no better builded see.

It was God's will, that while through town and tower
The furious Rodomont such ruin spread,
Thither arrived Rinaldo, Clermont's flower,
Three leagues above, he o'er the river's bed
Had cast a bridge; from whence his English power
To the left hand by crooked ways he led;
That, meaning to assail the barbarous foes,
The stream no obstacle might interpose.

Rinaldo had, with Edward, sent a force,
Six thousand strong, of archer-infantry,
And sped, with Ariman, two thousand horse
Of lightest sort; and foot and cavalry
Sought Paris by those roads, which have their course
Directly to and from the Picard sea;
That by St. Martin's and St. Denis' gate,
They might convey the aid the burghers wait.

Rinaldo sent with these the baggage-train
And carriages, with which his troops were stored;
And fetching, with the forces that remain,
A compass, he the upper way explored.
He bridge, and boat, and means to pass the Seine,
Had with him; for it here was ill to ford.
He past his army, broke the bridges down,
And rank'd in line the bands of either crown.

But having first the peers and captains wheeled
About him in a ring, the cavalier
Mounted the bank that overtopped the field,
So much that all might plainly see and hear;
And cried, "My lords, you should thanksgiving yield,
With lifted hands, to God who brought you here;
Through whom, o'er every nation, you may gain
Eternal glory, bought with little pain.

"Two princes, by your means, will rescued be,
If you relieve those city gates from siege;
Him, your own king, whom you from slavery
And death to save a subject's vows oblige;
And a famed emperor, of more majesty
Than ever yet in court was served by liege,
And with them other kings, and dukes, and peers,
And lords of other lands, and cavaliers.

"So that one city saving, not alone
Will the Parisians bless your helping hand,
Who, sadder than for sorrows of their own,
Timid, afflicted, and disheartened stand;
And their unhappy wives and children moan,
Which share in the same peril, and the band
Of virgins, dedicate to heavenly spouse,
Lest this day frustrate see their holy vows."

He, without clamor, without any noise,
So moves his triple host, their flags below.
Zerbino, marching by the stream, enjoys
The honor first to assail the barbarous foe;
The paladin the Irishman employs
More inland, with a wider wheel to go.
Thus England's horse and foot, the two between,
Led by the Duke of Lancaster, are seen.

The paladin rode on, along the shore,
When he had put the warriors in their way,
And, passing by their squadrons, pricked before
Valiant Zerbino and his whole array,
Until he reached the quarters of the Moor,
Where Oran's King, and King Sobrino lay;
Who, half-a-mile removed from those of Spain,
Posted upon that side, observed the plain.

With such a faithful escort fortified
And sure, the Christians who had thither wound,
With Silence and the Angel for their guide,
No longer could stand mute or keep their ground:
But hearing now the foe, with shouts defied
Their hosts, and made the shrilling trumpets sound;
And with loud clamors, which Heaven's concave fill,
Sent through the paynim's bones a deadly chill.

Rinaldo spurs before the troops combined
His foaming courser, and his weapon rests;
And a full bow-shot leaves the Scots behind;
So all delay the impatient peer molests.
As oftentimes an eddying gust of wind
Issues, ere yet the horrid storm infests,
So sallaying swiftly from the following herd,
Rinaldo forth upon Bayardo spurred.

At the aspect of the paladin of France,
The wavering Moorish files betray their fear;
And, trembling in their hands, is seen the lance,
Their thighs and stirrups quivering, like the spear.
King Pulian only marks the knight's advance,
Knowing Rinaldo not, unchanged in cheer;
Nor thinking such a cruel shock to meet,
Gallops against him on his courser fleet.

He stoops upon the weapon that he strains
Whole and collected for the martial game;
Then to his horse abandoning the reins,
And goading with both spurs the courser, came.
Upon the other side no valor feigns,
But shows, by doings, what he is in name;
With what rare grace and matchless art he wars,
The son of Aymon, rather son of Mars.

Well-matched in skill, they aimed their cruel blows,
With lances at each other's heads addrest;
Ill-matched in arms and valor were the foes,
For this past on, and that the champaign prest.
More certain proof of worth, when warriors close,
There needs than knightly lance well placed in rest;
But Fortune even more than Valor needs,
Which ill, without her saving succor, speeds.

With the good spear new-levelled in his fist,
At Oran's King behold Rinaldo dart.
Of bulk, and bone, and sinew, to resist
The monarch was but ill supplied with heart.
And his might pass for a fair stroke in list,
Though planted in the buckler's nether part.
Let those excuse it who refuse to admire,
Since the good paladin could reach no higher.

Nor did the buckler so the weapon stay,
Though made of palm within, and steel without,
But that it pierced the paunch, and made a way
To let that mean and ill-matched spirit out.
The courser, who had deemed that all the day
He must so huge a burden bear about,
Thanked in his heart the warrior who, well met,
Had thus preserved him from so sore a sweat.

Rinaldo, having broke his rested spear,
So wheels his horse he seems equipt with wings;
Who, turning swiftly with the cavalier,
Amid the closest crowd, impetuous springs.
Composed of brittle glass the arms appear
Where Sir Rinaldo red Fusberta swings.
Nor tempered steel is there, nor corslet thick,
Which keeps the sword from biting to the quick.

Yet few the tempered plates or iron pins
With which encounters that descending brand;
But targets, some of oak and some of skins,
And quilted vest and turban's twisted band.
Lightly such drapery good Rinaldo thins,
And cleaves. and bores, and shears, on either hand;
Nor better from his sword escapes the swarm,
Than grass from sweeping scythe, or grain from storm.

The foremost squadron had been put to flight,
When thither the vanguard Zerbino led.
Forth pricking from the following crowd, in sight
Appeared, with leveled lance, their youthful head:
With no less fury those who trooped to fight
Beneath his banner to the combat sped;
Like lions, like so many wolves, who leap
In fury to the assault of goat or sheep.

Both spurred their coursers on, with rested lance,
When either warrior to his foe was near;
And that short interval, that small expanse,
Of plain, between, was seen to disappear.
Was never witnessed yet a stranger dance!
For the Scots only ply the murderous spear;
Only the scattered paynims slaughtered lie,
As if conducted thither but to die.

Less worthless men of Africa were they,
Though ill had they been deemed of much avail.
Ill harnessed, and worse trained to martial fray,
Forthwith King Dardinel, the foe to assail,
Moved up his host, himself in helmet gay,
And sheathing all his limbs in plate and mail.
The fourth division I believe was best,
Which, under Isolier, to battle prest.

Thraso, this while, the valiant Duke of Mar,
Glad in the tumult, for the cavaliers
Who muster in his train, uplifts the bar,
And to the lists of fame his following cheers,
When Isolier, with horsemen of Navarre,
Entered in that fierce fray he sees and hears.
Next Ariodantes moved his chivalry,
Who was of late made Duke of Albany.

The deep sonorous trumpet's bellowing
And sound of drum, and barbarous instrument,
Combined with twang of bow, and whiz of sling,
Wheel and machine, and stone from engine sent,
And (what more loud than these appeared to ring)
Tumult, and shriek, and groan, and loud lament,
Composed a direr whole than what offends
The neighboring tribes where deafening Nile descends.

The arrows' double shower the ample sky
With wide-extended shade is seen to shroud;
Breath, smoke of sweat and dust ascend on high,
And seem to stamp in air a murky cloud.
By turns each host gives way, and you might spy,
Now chasing, now in flight, the self-same crowd;
And here some wight, beside his foeman slain,
Or little distant, prostrate on the plain.

Zerbino was more wonders seen to do
Than ever stripling of his age; he strowed
The ground with heaps of dead, and overthrew
The paynim numbers that about him flowed.
The valiant Ariodantes to his new-
Entrusted squadron mighty prowess showed;
Filling with dread and wonder, near and far,
The squadrons of Castile and of Navarre.

Chelindo and Mosco (bastards were the twain
Of Calabrun, late King of Aragon),
And one esteemed among the valiant train,
Calamidor, of Barcelona's town,
Leaving their standards, in the hope to gain,
By young Zerbino's death, a glorious crown,
Attacked the warrior with united force,
And wounded in his flanks the Prince's horse.

Pierced by three lances lay the courser strong,
But bold Zerbino quickly rose anew;
And, eager to avenge his charger's wrong,
The assailants, where he sees them, will pursue.
Zerbino at Mosco first, that overhung
Him, in the hope to make him prisoner, flew,
And pierced him in the flank; who from his sell
Pallid and cold, upon the champaign fell.

When him so killed, as 'twere by stealthy blow
Chelindo viewed, to avenge his brother slain,
He charged, intent the Prince to overthrow;
But he seized fast his courser by the rein,
And, thence to rise not, laid the charger low,
Destined no more to feed on hay or grain;
For at one stroke, so matchless was his force,
Zerbino cleft the rider and his horse.

When that fell blow Calamidor espied,
He turned the bridle short to speed away,
But him with downright cut Zerbino plied
Behind, and cried withal, "Stay, traitor, stay."
Nor from its aim the sword-stroke wandered wide,
Though from the mark it went somedeal astray;
The falchion missed the rider as he fled,
But reached the horse's croup, and stretched him dead.

He quits the horse, and thence for safety crawls;
But he with little boot escapes his foe;
For him Duke Thraso's horse o'erturns and mauls,
Opprest the ponderous courser's weight below.
Where the huge crowd upon Zerbino falls,
Ariodantes and Lurcanio go;
And with them many a cavalier and count,
Who do their best Zerbino to remount.

Then Artalico and Margano knew
The force of Ariodantes' circling brand:
While Casimir and Enearco rue
More deeply yet the puissance of his hand.
Smote by the knight, escaped the former two;
The others were left dead upon the strand.
Lurcanio shows what are his force and breath;
Who charges, smites, o'erturns, and puts to death.

Sir, think not that more inland on the plain
The warfare is less mortal than along
The stream, nor that the troops behind remain
Which to the Duke of Lancaster belong.
He valiantly assailed the flags of Spain,
And long in even scale the battle hung.
For horse and foot, and captains of those bands,
On either side, could deftly ply their hands.

Well matched awhile the Christian and the Moor
Appeared, without advantage in the fray.
Now this, now that gave ground, like corn before
The light and fickle breeze that blows in May;
Or as the sea that ripples on the shore,
Still comes and goes, nor keeps one certain way.
When hollow Fortune thus had sported long,
She proved disastrous to the paynim throng.

The Duke of Glocester Matalista bold
Assailed this while, and hurtled from his sell;
Fieramont Follicon o'erturned and rolled,
In the right shoulder smit, on earth as well.
The advancing English either paynim hold,
And bear their prisoners off to dungeon-cell.
This while, Sir Baricond is, in the strife,
By Clarence's bold Duke deprived of life.

Hence 'tis among the Moors amazement all,
While hence the Christians take such heart and pride,
The bands do nought but quit their ground and fall,
And break their order on the paynim side.
What time the Christian troops come on, and gall
Their flying ranks, which nowhere will abide;
And had not one arrived to aid their host,
The paynim camp had on that side been lost.

But Ferrau, who till this time ever nigh
Marsilius, scarce had quitted him that day,
When half destroyed he marked his chivalry,
And saw that baffled banner borne away,
Pricked his good courser forth, in time to spy,
(Where 'mid those squadrons hottest waxed the fray)
With his head severed by a grisly wound,
Olympio de la Serra fall to ground,

A stripling he who such sweet music vented,
Accorded to the horned lyre's soft tone,
That at the dulcet melody relented
The hearer's heart, though harder than a stone.
Happy if, with such excellence contented,
He had pursued so fair a fame alone,
And loathed shield, quiver, helmet, sword and lance
Destined by these to die a youth in France.

When bold Ferrau beheld his cruel plight,
For whom he love and much esteem profest,
He felt more pity at the doleful sight
Than, 'mid those thousands slain, for all the rest.
And smote the foe who slew him with such might,
That he his helm divided from the crest;
Cut front, eyes, visage, and mid bosom through,
And cast him down amid the slaughtered crew.

Nor stops he here, nor leaves a corslet whole,
Nor helm unbroken, where his sword is plied,
Of this the front or cheek, of that the poll,
The arm of other foe his strokes divide;
And he, of these divorcing body and soul,
Restores the wavering battle on that side;
Whence the disheartened and ignoble throng
Are scattered wide, and broke, and driven along.

Agramant from the wall a numerous band
Of horse and foot withdraws, and sends the array
Beneath the King of Fez, with a command
Behind the Moorish tents to make his way,
And those of Ireland in their march withstand,
Whom he sees hurrying with what haste they may,
And with wide wheel and spacious compass wind,
To fall upon the paynim camp behind.

The King of Fez upon this service prest;
For all delay might sore his work impede.
This while King Agramant unites the rest,
And parts the troops who to the battle speed.
He sought himself the river, where he guessed
The Moorish host might most his presence need;
And, from that quarter, had a courier prayed,
By King Zobrino sent, the monarch's aid.

He more than half his camp behind him led,
In one deep phalanx. At the mighty sound
Alone, the Scotsmen trembled and in dread
Abandoned honor, order, and their ground:
Lurcanio, Ariodantes, and their head,
Zerbino, there alone the torrent bound;
And haply he, who was afoot, had died,
But that in time his need Rinaldo spied.

Elsewhere the paladin was making fly
A hundred banners; while the cavalier
So chased the quailing Saracens, the cry
Of young Zerbino's peril smote his ear:
For, single and afoot, his chivalry
Amid the Africans had left the peer.
Rinaldo turned about and took his way
Where he beheld the Scots in disarray.

He plants his courser where their squadrons yield
To the fierce paynims, and exclaims; "Where go
Your bands, and why so basely quit the field,
Yielding so vilely to so vile a foe?
Behold the promised trophies, spear and shield,
Spoils which your loaded churches ought to show!
What praise! what glory! that alone, and reft
Of his good horse, your monarch's son is left!"

He from a squire receives a lance, and spies
King Prusion little distant, sovereign
Of the Alvaracchiæ, and against him hies;
Whom he unhorses, dead upon the plain.
So Agricalt, so Bambirago dies;
And next sore wounded is Sir Soridane,
Who had been slain as well amid the throng,
If good Rinaldo's lance had proved more strong.

That weapon broken, he Fusberta rears,
And smites Sir Serpentine, him of the star.
Though charmed from mischief are the cavalier's
Good arms, he falls astounded by the jar,
And thus Rinaldo round Zerbino clears
The field so widely, where those champions war,
That without more dispute he takes a horse
Of those that, masterless, at random course.

That he in time remounted it was well,
Who haply would not, if he more delayed;
For Agramant at once and Dardinel,
Sobrino, and Balastro thither made;
But he, who had in time regained the sell,
Wheeled here and there his horse, with brandished blade,
Despatching into hell the mixed array,
That how men live above their ghosts might say.

The good Rinaldo, who to overthrow
The strongest of the foemen covets still,
At Agramant directs a deadly blow,
Who seems too passing-proud, and greater ill
Works there, than thousand others of the foe,
And spurs his horse, the Moorish chief to spill.
He smote the monarch, broadside charged the steed,
And man and horse reversed upon the mead.

What time, without, in such destructive frays
Hate, Rage and Fury all offend by turns,
In Paris Rodomont the people slays,
And costly house and holy temple burns;
While Charles elsewhere another duty stays,
Who nothing hears of this, nor aught discerns.
He, in the town, receives the British band,
Which Edward and Sir Ariman command.

To him a squire approached, who, pale with dread,
Scarce drew his breath, and cried; "Oh, well away,
Alas! alas!" (and thus he often said,
Ere he could utter aught beside) "To-day,
To-day, sire, is the Roman empire sped,
And Christ to the heathen makes his flock a prey.
A fiend from air to-day has dropt that none
Henceforth may in this city make their won.

"Satan (in sooth, it can no other be)
Destroys and ruins the unhappy town.
Turn, and the curling wreaths of vapor see,
From the red flames that wander up and down.
List to those groans, and be they warrantry
Of the sad news thy servant now makes known!
One the fair city wastes with sword and fire,
Before whose vengeful fury all retire."

With many peers and chiefs, who worthiest are,
Summoned about him, Charlemagne is gone:
He bids direct his standards to the square
Whither the paynim had repaired; hears groan
And tumult, spies the horrid tokens there
Of cruelty, sees human members strown.
—No more—Let him return another time,
Who willingly will listen to this rhyme.

CANTO XIV

The Christian people then God's placid front
Must have disturbed with their excesses sore;
Since them with slaughter, rape, and rapine hunt,
Through all their quarters, plundering Turk and Moor.
But the unsparing rage of Rodomont
Proves worse than all the ills endured before.
I said that Charlemagne had made repair
In search of him toward the city square.

Thither large portion of the populace,
Climbing the palace roof, had made resort;
For strongly walled, and furnished was the place
With ammunition, for their long support.
Rodomont, mad with pride, had in his chase
Of the scared burghers, singly cleared the court;
He with one daring hand, which scorned the world,
Brandished the sword; his other wildfire hurled;

And smote and thundered, 'mid a fearful shower,
  At the sublime and royal house's gate.
To their life's peril, crumbling roof and tower
  Is tost by them that on the summit wait;
Nor any fears to ruin hall or bower;
  But wood and stone endure one common fate,
And marble column, slab, and gilded beam,
By sire and grandsire held in high esteem.

Nor bulwark, stone, nor arbalest, nor bow,
  Nor what upon the paynim smote beside,
Sufficed to arrest the sanguinary foe;
  Who broke and hewed, and shook that portal wide,
And in his fury let such daylight through,
  'Twas easy to espy, and might be spied,
In visages o'ercast in death-like sort,
That full of people was the palace court.

Through those fair chambers echoed shouts of dread,
  And feminine lament from dame distrest;
And grieving, through the house, pale women fled,
  Who wept, afflicted sore, and beat their breast.
And hugged the door-post and the genial bed,
  Too soon to be by stranger lords possest.
The matter in this state of peril hung
When thither came the King, his peers among.

Charles turned him round to these, of vigorous hand,
  Whom he had found in former peril true.
"Are you not those that erst with me did stand
  'Gainst Agolant in Aspramont? In you
Is vigor now so spent, (he said) the band,
  Who him, Troyano, and Almontes slew,
With hundreds more, that you now fear to face
One of that very blood, that very race?"

This said, he spurred his courser, crouched his spear,
  And charged the paynim; nor of life less free,
Sir Ogier joined the King in his career;
  Namus and Oliver, and, with the three,
Avino, Avolio, Otho, and Berlinghier
  (For one without the rest I never see);
And on the bosom, flanks, and on the front,
All smote together at King Rodomont.

But let us, sir, for love of Heaven, forego
  Of anger and of death the noisome lore;
And be it deemed that I have said enow,
  For this while, of that Saracen, not more
Cruel than strong; 'tis time in trace to go
  Of Gryphon, left with Origilla, before
Damascus' gate, and him who with her came,
The paramour, not brother, of the dame.

Of all the cities under eastern skies,
Most wealthy, populous, and fairly dight,
'Tis said Damascus is; which distant lies
From Salem seven days' journey; its fair site,
A fertile plain, abundant fruits supplies,
Winter and summer, sojourn of delight.
Shading the city from the dawning day,
A mountain intercepts its early ray.

Forward Sir Gryphon pricked, with his array,
Surveying, here and there, the whole at ease;
When them a knight arrested by the way,
And (such his wont and natural courtesies)
Obliged beneath his palace-roof to stay;
Where he let nought be wanting that might please;
And cheerfully the guests, with bath restored,
Next welcomed at his costly supper-board.

Large portion of the night, in fair discourse,
Was by those cavaliers together spent,
Who learned that love and pity's mickle force
Was proved in perilous experiment;
Then rising, when the supper's sumptuous course
Was cleared, to good and pleasant lodgings went;
And, as the ensuing morning fairly broke,
To sounds of triumph and rejoicing woke.

The circling drums' and trumpets' echoing strain
Assemble all the town within the square;
And now, when mixed with sound of horse and wain,
Loud outcries through the streets repeated are,
Sir Gryphon dons his glittering arms again,
A panoply of those esteemed most rare;
Whose mail, impassable by spear or brand,
She, the white fay, had tempered with her hand.

The man of Antioch in his company,
Armed him (a recreant worse than he was none),
Provided by their landlord's courtesy
With sturdy spears and good, the course to run;
Who with his kindred, a fair chivalry,
To bring the warriors to the square is gone;
With squires afoot and mounted upon steed,
Whom he bestowed, as aptest for their need.

They in the square arrived and stood aside,
Nor of themselves awhile would make display;
Better to see the martial gallants ride
By twos and threes, or singly, to the fray.
One told, by colors cunningly allied,
His joy or sorrow to his lady gay;
One, with a painted Love on crest or shield,
If she were cruel or were kind, revealed.

It was the Syrians' practice in that age
To arm them in this fashion of the west.
Haply this sprung out of their vicinage
And constant commerce with the Franks, possest
In those days of the sacred heritage
That God incarnate with his presence blest;
Which now, to them abandoned by the train
Of wretched Christians, heathen hounds profane.

The lovely ladies from their scaffolds throw
Upon the jousters yellow flowers and red;
While these, as loud the brazen trumpets blow,
Make their steeds leap and wheel and proudly tread.
Each, rode he well or ill, his art would show,
And with the goring spur his courser bled.
Hence this good cavalier earns fame and praise,
While others scornful hoots and laughter raise.

A suit of arms was prize of the assay,
Presented to the King some days before,
Which late a merchant found upon the way
Returning from Armenia; this the more
To grace, a vest, with noblest tissue gay,
The Syrian King subjoined, so powdered o'er
With jewels, gold, and pearls in rich device,
They made the meed a thing of passing price.

Of this you more in other place shall hear.
Of Gryphon now I tell, who at the just
Arrived, saw broken many a knightly spear,
And more than one good stroke and one good thrust.
Eight were there who made league together, dear
To Norandine, and held in sovereign trust;
Youths quick in arms and practised in the shock;
All lords or scions of illustrious stock.

At open barriers, one by one, the place
They kept against all comers for a day;
At first with lance, and next with sword or mace,
While them the King delighted to survey.
Ofttimes they pierce the corslet's iron case.
And everything in fine perform in play,
Which foemen do that deadly weapons measure,
Save that the King may part them at his pleasure.

That witless Antiochite, who, worthily,
By name was cowardly Martano hight,
Thinking, because his comrade, he must be
Partaker of the noble Gryphon's might,
Into the martial press rides valiantly,
Then stops; and the issue of a furious fight,
Which had begun between two cavaliers,
To wait, retiring from the strife, appears.

Seleucia's lord, of those companions one,
Combined in that emprize to keep the place,
Who then a course with bold Ombruno run.
Wounded the unhappy warrior in mid-face,
So that he slew him; mourned by every one,
Who as a worthy knight the warrior grace,
And over and above his worth before
All others, hold him for his courteous lore.

When vile Martano from his place discerned
The fate which might be his with fearful eye,
Into his craven nature he returned,
And straight began to think how he might fly;
But him from flight the watchful Gryphon turned,
And, after much ado, with act and cry,
Urged him against a knight upon the ground,
As at the ravening wolf men slip the hound;

Who will pursue the brindled beast for ten
Or twenty yards, and, after, stop to bay;
When he beholds his flashing eyes, and when
He sees the grisly beast his teeth display.
'Twas thus, before those valiant gentlemen
And princes, present there in fair array,
Fearful Martano, seized with panic dread,
Turned to the right his courser's rein and head.

Yet he who would excuse the sudden wheel
Upon his courser might the blame bestow:
But, after, he so ill his strokes did deal,
Demosthenes his cause might well forego.
With paper armed he seems, and not with steel,
So shrinks he at the wind of every blow:
At length he breaks the ordered champions through,
Amid loud laughter from the circling crew.

Clapping of hands, and cries, at every turn,
Were heard from all that rabble widely spread.
As a wolf sorely hunted makes return
To earth, to his retreat Martano fled.
Gryphon remained, and sullied with the scorn,
Esteemed himself, which on his mate was shed;
And rather than be there, he in his ire,
Would gladly find himself i' the midst of fire.

Already he the lance upon his thigh
Has rested, little used to miss the foe;
Then makes with flowing rein his courser fly,
And next some deal advanced, directs the blow;
And, smiting, puts to the last agony
Sidonia's youthful lord, by him laid low.
O'ercome with wonder each assistant rises,
Whom sore the unexpected deed surprises.

Gryphon returned, and did the weapon wield,
Whole and recovered, which he couched before,
And in three pieces broke it on the shield.
Which bold Laodicéa's baron bore.
Thrice or four times about to press the field
He seemed, and lay along the crupper, sore
Astound; yet rose at length, unsheathed his blade,
Wheeled his good courser, and at Gryphon made.

Gryphon, who in his saddle sees the peer
Advancing toward him, nor unseated by
The encounter, says: "The failure of the spear
In a few strokes the sabre shall supply;"
And on his temples smote a stroke so shear
It seemed that it descended from the sky;
And matched it with another, and again
Another, till he stretched him on the plain.

Here two good brothers of Apamia were
In tourney wont to have the upper hand:
Corimbo named and Thyrsis was the pair;
Both overturned by Gryphon on the land.
One at the encounter left his saddle bare,
On the other Gryphon used his trenchant brand.
This valiant knight was, in the common trust,
Sure to obtain the honors of the just.

Bold Salinterno, mid the warlike train,
Was in the lists, vizier and marshal hight,
Who had the government of all that reign,
And was, withal, a puissant man of might:
The tourney's prize he sees, with much disdain,
About to be borne off by foreign knight.
A lance he snatches, and to Gryphon cries,
And him with many menaces defies.

But he makes answer with a massy spear,
Out of ten others chosen as the best;
And leveling at the buckler of the peer,
For greater surety, pierces plate and breast.
'Twixt rib and rib it bored the cavalier,
Issuing a palm behind. To all the rest,
The King excepted, welcome was the blow;
For each was greedy Salinterno's foe.

Two of Damascus next Sir Gryphon sped,
Hermophilo and Carmondo. This, arrayed
Under his flag, the King's militia led;
That was as lord high admiral obeyed.
This lightly at the shock on earth was shed,
And that, reversed, upon the ground o'erlaid
By his weak horse, too feeble to withstand
Sir Gryphon's mighty push and puissant hand.

Yet in the field remained Seleucia's knight,
The best of all the other seven at need;
And one who well accompanied his might
With perfect armor and a gallant steed.
Both at the helmet, where it locks, take sight,
And with their spears to the encounter speed:
But Gryphon hardest smote, whose paynim foe
Lost his left stirrup, staggered by the blow.

They cast the truncheons down, their coursers wheel
And, full of daring, with drawn falchions close.
Sir Gryphon was the first a stroke to deal,
Which might have split an anvil; at the blow's
Descent, the shield is splintered—bone and steel
This had its lord mid thousand other chose;
And, but 'twas double, and the coat as well,
The sword had cleft the thigh on which it fell.

He of Seleucia at Sir Gryphon's casque,
At the same time, so fell a blow addrest,
It would have rent and torn the iron mask,
Had it not been enchanted like the rest.
The paynim's labor is a fruitless task,
Of arms so hard Sir Gryphon is possest;
Who has the foe's already cleft and broke
In many parts, nor thrown away a stroke.

Each one might see how much Seleucia's lord
Was overmatched by Gryphon, and that day
The worsted man had perished by the sword,
Had not the monarch quickly stopped the fray.
To his guard King Normandino spake the word,
And bade them enter, and the duel stay:
They part the knights, whom they asunder bear,
And much the King is lauded for his care.

The eight, who had to keep the field pretended
From all the world, nor yet their part had done
On a sole knight—their quarrel ill defended—
Had vanished from the tilt-yard one by one.
The others, who with them should have contended,
Stood idle; for to answer them was none.
Since Gryphon had forestalled, in the debate,
What they should all have done against those eight;

And, for such little time endured the play,
Less than an hour sufficed to finish all.
But Norandine, the pastime to delay,
And to continue it till even-fall,
Descending from his place, bade clear the way;
And the huge squad divided, at his call,
Into two troops, whom, ranked by blood and might,
The monarch formed and matched for other fight.

Sir Gryphon, during this, had made return
Homeward, with anger and with fury stung;
Less thinking of his honors than the scorn
Which on the vile Martano had been flung.
Hence, from himself the opprobrious shame to turn,
Martano now employs his lying tongue;
And she, the false and cunning courtezan,
Assists him in his scheme as best she can.

Whether the youth believed the tale or no,
He the excuse received, like one discreet;
And deemed it best for them at once to go,
And secretly and silently retreat.
For fear, that if the populace should know
Martano base, they him might ill entreat.
So, by short ways and close, they quit the abode,
And issue from the gates upon their road.

Sir Gryphon, was he or his horse foredone
With toil, or was it sleep his eyes down-weighed,
Ere yet the troop beyond two miles had gone,
At the first inn upon the highway stayed.
He doffed his armor all, and morion,
And had the steeds of trappings disarrayed;
And next alone he to a chamber sped,
Locked himself in, undressed, and went to bed.

No sooner he his head had rested there,
Than with deep sleep opprest, he closed his eye;
So heavily, no badgers in their lair,
Or dormice, overcome with slumber, lie.
Martano and Origilla, to take the air,
Entered this while a garden that was nigh;
And there the strangest fraud together bred,
That ever entered into mortal head.

Martano schemed to take away the steed
And gear, in which Sir Gryphon had been dight,
And stand before the monarch, in the weed
Of him who had in joust so proved his might.
As he had shaped, in thought, he did the deed:
He took away the warrior's horse, more white
Than milk, his buckler, surcoat, arms and crest;
In all Sir Gryphon's knightly ensigns drest.

He, who was clad in trappings not his own,
Like the ass mantled in the lion's hide,
As he expected, to the King unknown,
Was called in place of Gryphon. When descried
Of Norandine, he rising from his throne,
Embraced and kissed, and placed him by his side:
Nor deems enough to praise and hold him dear,
But wills that all around his praise should hear.

And bids them the sonorous metal blow,
Proclaiming him the conqueror of that day;
And round about loud voices, high and low,
The unworthy name throughout the lists convey.
He wills that, side by side, with him shall go
The knight, when homeward he shall take his way;
And him such favor shows, intent to please,
As might have honored Mars or Hercules.

Him lodgings fair he gave, wherein to dwell
At court; and she who with the peer did ride
Was honored by the courteous king as well,
False Origilla, with knight and page supplied.
But it is time that I of Gryphon tell;
Who unsuspecting she, or wight beside,
Him would with treacherous stratagem deceive,
Had fallen asleep, nor ever waked till eve.

When he how late it was, awaking, knew,
With speed he from the chamber did withdraw;
And hastened where he, with the other crew,
Left Origilla and her false brother-in-law:
And when, nor these, nor, upon better view,
His armor nor his wonted clothes he saw,
Suspicious waxed; and more suspicion bred
The ensigns of his comrade left instead.

The host, arriving, him at full possest
Of everything, and how, in white array,
That warrior, with the lady and the rest,
Had to the city measured back the way.
By little and by little, Gryphon guessed
What love from him had hidden till that day;
And knew, to his great sorrow, in the other
Origilla's paramour, and not her brother.

Now he lamenting for his folly stood,
That having heard the truths the pilgrim said,
He should have let her story change his mood,
Who him before so often had betrayed.
He might have venged himself, nor did; now would,
Too late, inflict the punishment delayed;
Constrained (a crying error) in his need
To take that wily treachour's arms and steed.

He better would have gone like naked man,
Than braced the unworthy cuirass on his breast;
Or hastened the detested shield to span,
Or place upon his helm the scorned crest.
But of the lover, and that courtezan,
He, passion mastering reason, took the quest:
And bending to Damascus' gate his way,
Arrived an hour before the close of day.

On the left hand a castle richly dight
Stood nigh the gate, to which Sir Gryphon rode.
Besides that it was strong and armed for fight,
Filled with rare chambers was the rich abode.
The first of Syria—king, and lord, and knight,
And lady—in a gentle group bestowed,
There in an open gallery fairly met,
Were at their glad and costly supper set.

With the high tower the beauteous gallery, clear,
Beyond the city-wall, projected out,
From whence might be discovered, far and near,
The spacious fields and different roads about.
When Gryphon now, in his opprobrious gear,
And arms, dishonored by the rabble's flout,
Makes, by ill fortune to the gate resort,
He by the King is seen, and all his court;

And, taken for the man whose crest he wears,
In dame and knight moves laughter through the ring.
The vile Martano, as a man who shares
The royal grace, sits next below the King;
And next she whom her love so fitly pairs;
Whom Norandino gaily questioning,
Demands of them, who is the coward knight,
That of his honor makes so passing light;

Who after feat so base and foul, anew
Approaches, with such front and shameless cheer,
And cries, "It seems a thing unheard, that you,
An excellent and worthy cavalier,
Should take this man for your companion, who
Has not in all our wide Levant his peer.
Did you with him for contrast's sake combine,
That so your valor might more brightly shine?

"But did not love for you my will restrain,
By the eternal gods, I truly swear,
He should endure such ignominious stain,
As I am wont to make his fellows share;
Him would I make of my long-nursed disdain
Of cowardice perpetual record bear.
To you, by whom he hither was conveyed,
If now unpunished, let his thanks be paid."

That vessel of all filthy vices, he,
Made answer: "Mighty sir, I cannot say
Who is the stranger that fell in with me
Journeying from Antioch hither, by the way:
But him I worthy of my company
Deemed, by his warlike semblance led astray.
I nothing of his deeds have heard or seen,
Save what ill feats to-day have witnessed been;

"Which moved me so, it little lacked but I,
For punishment of his unworthy fear,
Had put him out of case again to ply,
In martial tournament, the sword or spear;
And, but in reverence to your Majesty
And presence, I forbore my hand to rear,
Not for his sake; nor be thy mercy showed
On him, as my companion on the road,

"Whose former fellowship appears a stain;
And ever 'twill sit heavy at my heart,
If I, uninjured, see the wretch again
'Scape, to the scandal of the warlike art.
'Twere better he from tower, a worthy pain,
Were gibbeted, than suffered to depart:
Hung as a beacon for the coward's gaze.
Such were a princely deed, and worthy praise."

A voucher he in Origilla had,
Who well, without a sign, his purpose read.
"I deem not," cried the King, "his works so bad,
That they should cost the stranger knight his head:
Enough that he again the people glad,
For penance of his weighty sin." This said,
He quickly called a baron of his crew,
And him enjoined the deed he was to do.

With many armed men that baron fares,
And to the city-gate descending, here
Collects his troop, and for the attempt prepares,
Waiting the coming of the cavalier;
And him surprises so at unawares,
He, softly, 'twixt two bridges, takes the peer;
And him detains, with mockery and scorn,
In a dark chamber, till returning morn.

The early sun had scarce his golden hair
Uplifted from his ancent nurse's breast,
Beginning, upon Alpine regions bare,
To chase the shades and gild the mountain-crest,
When Martan', fearing Gryphon might declare
His wrong, and to the King the truth attest,
Retorting upon him the slander cast,
Took leave, and thence upon his journey past.

His ready wit a fit excuse supplies
Why he stays not to see the recreant shown.
He is with other gifts, beside the prize,
Rewarded for the victory not his own,
And letters patent, drawn in ample wise,
Wherein his lofty honors wide are blown.
Let him depart; I promise he shall meet
A guerdon worthy of his treacherous feat.

Gryphon is brought with shame into the square,
When it is fully thronged with gazing wight,
Whom they of cuirass and of helmet bare,
And leave in simple cassock, meanly dight;
And, as to slaughter he conducted were,
Place on a wain, conspicuous to the sight;
Harnessed to which two sluggish cows are seen,
Weary and weak, and with long hunger lean.

Thronging about the ignoble car, appear
Brazen-faced boy and girl of evil fame,
Who, each in turn, will play the charioteer,
And all assail the knight with bitter blame.
The boys might be a cause of greater fear,
For, joined to marks and mows, and words of shame,
The warrior they with volleyed stones would slay,
But that the wiser few their fury stay.

That which of his disgrace had been the ground,
Though no true evidence of guilt, his mail
And plate, are dragged in due dishonor round,
Suspended at the shameful wagon's tail.
The wain is stopt, and to the trumpet's sound,
Heralds, in front of a tribunal's pale,
His shame, before his eyes, amid the crowd,
(Another's evil deed) proclaim aloud.

They take their prisoner thence, and so repair
In front of temple, dwelling-house, and store;
Nor any cruel name of mockery spare,
Nor leave unsaid a word of filthy lore;
And him at last without the city bear;
The foolish rabble, trusting evermore
Their thrall to banish to the sound of blows,
Who passing little of its prisoner knows.

The warrior's gyves no sooner they undo,
And from their manacles free either hand,
Than Gryphon seizes shield and sword, and through
The rabble makes long furrows with his brand.
With pike and spear unfurnished was the crew,
Who without weapons came, a witless band.
The rest for other canto I suspend,
For sir, 'tis time this song should have an end.

CANTO XV

Whither fear drives, in rout, the others all,
Some scattered here, some there, on every side,
Fill road and field; to gain the city wall
Some strive, and smothered in the mighty tide,
One on another, in the gateway fall.
Gryphon, all thought of pity laid aside,
Threats not nor speaks, but whirls his sword about,
Well venging on the crowd their every flout.

Of those who to the portal foremost fled,
The readiest of the crowd their feet to ply,
Part, more intent upon their proper need
Than their friends' peril, raise the drawbridge high;
Part, weeping and with deathlike visage, speed,
Nor turn their eyes behind them as they fly:
While through the ample city outcry loud,
And noise, and tumult rises from the crowd.

Two nimble Gryphon seizes, mid the train,
When to their woe the bridge is raised; of one
Upon the field the warrior strews the brain,
Which he beats out on a hard grinding stone;
Seized by the breast, the other of the twain
Over the city wall by him is thrown.
Fear chills the townsmen's marrow, when they spy
The luckless wretch descending from the sky.

Many there were who feared in their alarms,
Lest o'er the wall Sir Gryphon would have vaulted;
Nor greater panic seized upon those swarms,
Than if the soldan had the town assaulted.
The sound of running up and down, of arms,
Of cry of muezzins, on high exalted;
Of drums and trumpets, heaven, 'twould seem, rebounded,
And that the world was by the noise confounded.

But I will to another time delay,
What chanced on this occasion, to recount.
'Tis meet I follow Charles upon his way,
Hurrying in search of furious Rodomont,
Who did the monarch's suffering people slay.
I said, with him, the danger to affront,
Went Namus, Oliver, the Danish peer,
Avino, Avolio, Otho, and Berlinghier.

Eight lances' shock, that eight such warriors guide,
Which all at once against the King they rest,
Endured the stout and scaly serpent's hide,
In which the cruel Moor his limbs had drest.
As a barque rights itself—the sheet untied
That held its sail—by growing wind opprest
So speedily Sir Rodomont arose,
Though a hill had been uprooted by the blows.

Rainier and Guido, Richard, Salomon,
  Ivan, Ughetto, Turpin, and the twain—
Angiolin, Angelier—false Ganelon,
  And Mark and Matthew from St Michael's plain,
With the eight of whom I spake, all set upon
  The foe, with Edward and Sir Arimane;
Who leading succors from the English shore,
Had lodged them in the town short time before.

He at his head took aim who stood most nigh;
  Ughetto was the miserable wight,
Whom to the teeth he clove, and left to die;
  Though of good temper was his helmet bright.
As well the others many stokes let fly
  At him, himself; which all the warrior smite,
But harm (so hard the dragon's hide) no more,
Than needle can the solid anvil score.

All the defenses, round, abandoned are,
  The unpeopled city is abandoned all;
For, where the danger is the greatest, there
  The many give their aid, at Charles's call:
Through every street they hurry to the square,
  Since flying nought avails, from work and wall.
Their bosoms so the monarch's presence warms,
That each again takes courage, each takes arms.

Of cavaliers and footmen such the squeeze,
  That hardly can the place the press contain:
They cluster there as thick as swarming bees,
  Who thither from each passage troop amain.
So that, were they unarmed, and with more ease
  Than stalks or turnips he could cleave the train,
Ill Rodomont in twenty days would clear
The gathering crowd, united far and near.

Unknowing how himself from thence to free,
  The paynim by this game is angered sore,
Who little thins the gathering rabblery,
  Staining the ground with thousands slain or more;
And all the while, in his extremity,
  Finds that his breath comes thicker than before;
And sees he cannot pierce the hostile round,
Unless he thence escape while strong and sound.

The monarch rolls about his horrid eyes,
  And sees that foes all outlets barricade;
But, at the cost of countless enemies,
  A path shall quickly by his hand be made.
Where Fury calls him, lo! the felon hies,
  And brandishes on high his trenchant blade,
To assail the newly entered British band,
Which Edward and Sir Ariman command.

At one cross-blow fifteen or twenty foes
He hews, as many leaves without a head,
At cross or downright-stroke; as if he rows
Trashes in vineyard or in willow-bed.
At last all smeared with blood the paynim goes,
Safe from the place, which he has heaped with dead;
And wheresoe'er he turns his steps, are left
Heads, arms, and other members, maimed and cleft.

He from the square retires in such a mode,
None can perceive that danger him appalls;
But, during this, what were the safest road,
By which to sally, he to thought recalls.
He comes at last to where the river flowed
Below the isle, and passed without the walls.
In daring men at arms and mob increase,
Who press him sore, nor let him part in peace.

He turned upon the rabble-rout who bayed
Behind him, thrice or more, by anger driven,
And stained anew his falchion, by whose blade
More than a hundred deadly wounds were given.
But reason, finally, his fury stayed
Before the bloody carnage stank to heaven;
And he, with better counsel, from the side
Cast himself down into Seine's foaming tide.

Athwart the current swam, with arms and all,
As if by corks upborne, the cavalier.
Though thou Antæus bred'st, and Hannibal,
O Africa! thou never bred'st his peer!
When now across the stream, without the wall,
He turned, and saw the royal town appear,
To have traversed all the city moved his ire,
Leaving it undestroyed by sword or fire.

As soon as the redoubted Rodomont
Knew in a dwarf the courier of his dame,
He all his rage extinguished, cleared his front,
And felt his courage brighten into flame.
All else he deems the courier may recount,
Save that a wight had brought him scathe and shame
And cries (encountering him with cheerful brow)
"How fares our lady? whither sent art thou?"

"Nor mine nor thine that lady will I say,
Who is another's thrall," the dwarf replied.
"We, on our road, encountered yesterday
A knight, who seized and bore away the bride."
Jealousy, upon this, took up the play,
And, cold as asp, embraced the King. Her guide
Pursued his tale, relating how the train,
Their mistress taken, by one man were slain.

Then raging, to the pigmy dwarf who bore
The news, exclaimed the King, "Now hence away!"
Nor horse he waits, nor carriage, nor, before
Departing, deigns to him a word to say.
He hurries with such speed that not with more
The lizard darts at noon across the way.
Horse had he none, but be he whose he might,
Would make his own the first that came in sight.

When, on the Saracen's departure, spent,
About King Charles, was the consuming flame,
He ranged his troops anew; some warriors went
To strengthen feeble posts that succors claim;
The rest against the Saracens are sent,
To give the foe checkmate and end the game;
And from Saint Germain's to Saint Victor's gates,
He pours the host that on his signal waits.

He these at Saint Marcellus' gate, where lay
Outstretched a large circumference of plain,
Bade one another wait, in one array,
To reunite against the paynim train.
Inflaming every one to smite and slay,
In guise that for a record should remain,
He made the various troops fall in below
Their banners, and the battle-signal blow.

Agramant has remounted in his sell,
While this is doing in his foe's despite,
And, with the stripling that loved Isabel,
Is waging perilous and fearful fight.
Lurcanio with Sobrino strives as well;
Rinaldo a troop encounters, whom the knight,
With Valor and with Fortune for his guide,
Charges, and breaks, and routs on every side.

While so the battle stands, King Charlemagne
Falls on the rear-guard of the paynim foe,
Where bold Marsilius halts the flower of Spain,
And forms the host, his royal flag below.
On these King Charlemagne impels his train,
Who, foot with horse to flank, against them go.
While so the deafening drum and trumpet sounds
'Twould seem the spacious world the din rebounds.

In other part, Rinaldo, in his mood,
Has slain more enemies than I can say.
Before the warlike knight no order stood;
You might have seen the ample camp give way.
No less Zerbino and Lurcanio good
Do deeds which will be told in every day:
This, with a thrust, has bold Balastro slain,
That Finaduro's helm has cleft in twain.

Yet will the squadron not so firmly stand,
Maugre the valor that his deeds display,
So firmly, as to wait the Christian band,
In number less, but steadier in array,
More used to joust and manage of the brand,
And all things appertaining to the fray.
Setta and Morocco turned, and seized, with dread,
Zumara and Canaries' islesmen fled.

But faster than the rest Alzerba flies,
Whom Dardinel opposed, and now with sore
Reproach, and now with prayer he moves, and tries
What best he deems their courage may restore.
"If good Almontes has deserved," he cries,
"That you should by his memory set such store,
Now shall be seen—be seen, if you will me,
His son, abandon in such jeopardy.

"For sake of my green youth, I pray you stand,
That youth whereon your hopes were wont to feed
And suffer not that, scattered by the brand,
To Africa be lost our noble seed.
Save you united go, be sure the land
Is shut against you, wheresoe'er you speed.
Too high a wall to climb is mountain-steep,
The yawning sea a ditch too wide to leap.

"Far better 'tis to perish than to be
Torn by these dogs, or lie at their control.
Since vain is every other remedy,
Wait, friends, for love of Heaven, the advancing shoal;
They are not gifted with more lives than we;
Have but one pair of hands, have but one soul."
So saying, the bold youth, amid the crew
Of enemies, the Earl of Huntley slew.

Lurcanio next met Dardinello's eye;
He upon earth Dorchino had laid low,
Pierced through the throat, and hapless Gardo nigh
Cleft to the teeth; at him, as all too slow,
He from Altheüs vainly seeks to fly,
Whom as his heart Lurcanio loves, a blow
Upon his head behind the Scotchman speeds;
And, slaughtered by the stroke, the warrior bleeds.

Dardinel, to avenge him, took a spear,
And, should he lay the fierce Lurcanio dead,
Vowed to his Mahomet, if he could hear,
The mosque should have his empty arms; this said,
Ranging the field in haste, that cavalier
He in the flank, with thrust so full and dread,
Encountered, that it went through either side;
And he to his to strip the baron cried.

From me it sure were needless to demand,
If Ariodantes, when his brother fell,
Was grieved; if he with his avenging hand
Among the damned would send Sir Dardinel;
But all access the circling troops withstand
And bar, no less baptized than infidel;
Yet would he venge himself, and with his blade,
Now here, now there, an open passage made.

He charges, chases, breaks, and overthrows
Whoever cross him on the crowded plain;
And Dardinello, who his object knows,
Would fain the wish content; but him the train
Impedes as well, which round about him flows,
And renders aye his every purpose vain.
If one on all sides thins the Moorish rank,
The other slays Scot, Englishman, and Frank.

But here enough for this one while is shown
Of their illustrious doings in the west;
'Tis time I seek Sir Gryphon, and make known
How he, with fury burning in his breast,
That rabble-rout had broke and overthrown,
Struck with more fear than ever men possest.
Thither speeds Norandine on that alarm,
And for his guard above a thousand arm.

King Norandino, girt with peer and knight,
Seeing on every side the people fly,
Rides to the gates, with squadron duly dight,
And at his hest the portals open fly.
Meanwhile Sir Gryphon, having put to flight
The weak and worthless rabble far and nigh,
The scorned arms (to keep him from that train),
Such as they were, took up and donned again,

And nigh a temple strongly walled, and round
Whose base a moat for its protection goes,
Upon a little bridge takes up his ground,
That him his enemies may not enclose.
Lo! loudly shouting, and with threatening sound,
A mighty squadron through the gateway flows.
The valiant Gryphon changes not his place,
And shows how small his fear by act and face.

But when, approaching near, he saw the band,
He sallied forth to meet them by the way;
And wielding still his sword in either hand,
Made cruel havoc in the close array.
Then on the narrow bridge resumed his stand,
Nor there his hunters only held at bay;
Anew he sallied, and returned anew,
Aye leaving bloody signs when he withdrew.

Fore-stroke and back he deals, and on the ground
Horsemen and foot o'erthrows on every side:
This while the ample mob the knight surround,
And more and more the warfare rages wide.
At length Sir Gryphon fears he shall be drowned,
(So waxed their numbers) in the increasing tide;
And hurt in the left shoulder, through his mail,
And thigh, his wind as well begins to fail.

But Valor, who so oft befriends her own,
Makes him find grace in Norandino's eyes;
Who, while alarmed, he hurries there, o'erthrown
So many men, such heaps of dead espies,
While he views wounds that Hector's hand alone
He weens could deal—to him all testifies
That he had put an undeserved shame
Upon a cavalier of mighty name.

Next seeing him more near, whose falchion's sweep
Had dealt such deaths amid his chivalry,
And raised about himself that horrid heap,
And stained the water with that bloody dye,
He thought that he beheld Horatius keep,
Singly, the bridge against all Tuscany;
And vext, and anxious to remove the stain,
Recalled his men, and that with little pain.

One and the other are alike to seek
In the inquiry where the knight may use;
But they encounter with the pilgrim Greek,
Who then of false Origilla gives them news;
Relating, as of her he haps to speak,
That toward Antioch she her way pursues,
By a new leman of that city charmed,
Who her with fierce and sudden flame had warmed.

Aquilant asked him, if he had possest
Sir Gryphon of the news to them conveyed,
Who, hearing that he had, surmised the rest—
Where he was gone, and by what motive swayed.
He followed Origilla, was manifest,
And had in quest of her for Antioch made,
To take her from his rival, and with view
On him some memorable scathe to do.

Aquilant brooked not Gryphon such a feat,
Without him, and alone, should thus assay,
And took his armor and pursued his beat;
But first besought the Duke he would delay
To visit France and his paternal seat,
Till he from Antioch measured back his way.
At Joppa he embarks, who deems by sea
The better and securer way to be.

And lastly toward the east the pilot veered
Her ready tiller, prompt his course to scan;
And straightway for the wide Orontes steered,
And watched his time, and for the harbor ran.
Aquilant, when his bark the margin neared,
Bade lower the bridge, and issued, horse and man,
In armor, and along the river wended,
Up-stream, till he his way at Antioch ended.

To inform himself of that Martano bent;
And heard that he to Antioch was addrest
With Origilla, where a tournament
Was to be solemnized by royal hest.
To track whom Aquilant was so intent,
Assured that Gryphon had pursued his quest,
He Antioch left again that very day,
But not by sea again would take his way.

He toward Lidia and Larissa goes,
At rich Aleppo makes a longer stay.
God, to make plain that he, even here, bestows
On evil and on good their fitting pay,
At a league's distance from Mamuga, throws
Martano in the avenging brother's way,
Martano traveling with the tourney's prize,
Displayed before his horse in showy wise.

Sir Aquilant believed, at the first show,
His brother he in vile Martano spied,
For arms and vest, more white than virgin snow,
The coward in the warrior's sight belied,
And sprang toward him, with that joyful "Oh!"
By which delight is ever signified;
But changed his look and tone, when, nearer brought,
He sees that he is not the wight he sought;

And through that evil woman's treachery,
Deemed Gryphon murdered by the cavalier;
And, "Tell me," he exclaimed, "thou, who must be
Traitor and thief—both written in thy cheer—
Whence are these arms? and wherefore do I thee
View on the courser of my brother dear?
Say is my brother slaughtered or alive?
How didst thou him of horse and arms deprive?"

When Origilla hears him, in affright
She turns her palfrey, and for flight prepares;
But Aquilant, more quick, in her despite,
Arrests the traitress, ere she farther fares.
At the loud threats of that all-furious knight,
By whom he so was taken unawares,
Martan' turns pale and trembles like a leaf,
Nor how to act or answer knows the thief.

Aquilant thundered still, and, to his dread,
A falchion, pointed at his gullet, shewed,
And swore with angry menaces the head
From him and Origilla should be hewed,
Save in all points the very truth be said.
Awhile on this ill-starred Martano chewed,
Revolving still what pretext he might try
To lessen his grave fault, then made reply:

"Know, sir, you see my sister in this dame,
And one of good and virtuous parents born,
Though she has lately led a life of shame,
And been by Gryphon foully brought to scorn;
And, for I loathed such blot upon our name,
Yet weened that she could ill by force be torn
From such a puissant wight, I laid a scheme
Her by address and cunning to redeem.

"With her I planned the means, who in her breast
Nursed the desire a better life to prove,
That she, when Gryphon was retired to rest,
In silence from the warrior should remove.
This done, lest he should follow on our quest,
And so undo the web we vainly wove,
Him we deprived of horse and arms, and we
Are hither come together, as you see."

His cunning might have proved of good avail,
For Aquilant believed him easily;
And, save in taking Gryphon's horse and mail,
He to the knight had done no injury;
But that he wrought so high the specious tale
As manifested plainly 'twas a lie.
In all 'twas perfect, save that he the dame
Had for his sister vouched with whom he came.

Aquilant had in Antioch chanced to know
She was his concubine—well certified
Of this by many—and in furious glow
Exclaimed: "Thou falsest robber, thou hast lied!"
And dealt, with that, the recreant such a blow,
He drove two grinders down his throat; then tied
(Nor sought Martano with his foe to cope)
The caitliff's arms behind him with a rope.

And, though she for excuse tried many wiles,
Did thus as well by Origilla untrue;
And till he reached Damascus' lofty piles,
Them by town, street, or farm, behind him drew;
And will a thousand times a thousand miles,
With sorrow and with suffering, drag the two,
Till he his brother find; who, at his pleasure,
May vengeance to the guilty couple measure.

Sir Aquilant made squires and beasts as well
  Return with him, and to Damascus came;
And heard renown, throughout the city swell,
  Plying her ample wings, Sir Gryphon's name.
Here, great and little, every one could tell
  'Twas he that in the tourney won such fame,
And had, by one that ill deserved his trust,
Been cheated of the honors of the joust.

Attended with few squires the Syrian king,
  As then he chanced to be, came forth with speed,
And with Sir Aquilant encountering,
  Who Gryphon had avenged with worthy deed,
Him honored with fair cheer, and home would bring,
  And in his palace lodged, as fitting meed;
Having the prisoned pair, with his consent,
First in the bottom of a turret pent.

The valiant Norandino could not choose
  (Made by such error temperate and wise)
But, full of penitence and sorrow, muse
  With downcast spirit and in mournful guise,
On having bid his men a knight misuse,
  Whom all shoud worthily reward and prize;
So that he, night and morning, in his thought,
How to content the injured warrior sought.

And he determined, in the public sight
  O' the city, guilty of that injury,
With all such honor as to perfect knight
  Could by a puissant monarch rendered be,
Him with the glorious guerdon to requite,
  Which had been ravished by such treachery:
And hence, within a month, proclaimed the intent
To hold another solemn tournament.

For which he made what stately preparation
  Was possible to make by sceptered king.
Hence Fame divulged the royal proclamation
  Throughout all Syria's land, with nimble wing,
Phœnicia and Palestine; till the relation
  Of this in good Astolpho's ears did ring;
Who, with the lord that ruled that land in trust,
Resolved he would be present at the joust.

For a renowned and valiant cavalier
  Has the true history vaunted, Sansonnet,
By Roland christened, Charles (I said), the peer
  Over the Holy Land as ruler set:
He with the Duke takes up his load, to steer
  Thither, where Rumor speaks the champions met.
So that his ears, on all sides in the journey,
Are filled with tidings of Damascus' tourney.

Thither the twain their way those countries through,
By easy stages and by slow, addrest,
That fresh upon the day of joust the two
Might in Damascus-town set up their rest.
When at the meeting of cross-ways they view
A person who, in movement and in vest,
Appears to be a man, but is a maid,
And marvelously fierce, in martial raid.

Marphisa was the warlike virgin's name,
And such her worth, she oft with naked brand
Had pressed Orlando sore in martial game,
And him who had Mount Alban in command;
And ever, night and day, the armed dame
Scowered, here and there, by hill and plain, the land
Hoping with errant cavalier to meet,
And win immortal fame by glorious feat.

When Sansonetto and the English knight
She sees approaching her in warlike weed,
Who seem two valiant warriors in her sight,
As of large bone, and nerved for doughty deed,
On them she fain would prove her martial might,
And to defy the pair has moved her steed.
When, eyeing the two warriors, now more near,
Marphisa recognized the Duke and peer.

They questioned one another of their way;
And when the Duke has said (who first replied)
That he Damascus seeks, where to assay
Their virtuous deeds all knights of valor tried
The Syrian King invites, in martial play,
The bold Marphisa, at this hearing, cried
(Ever to prove her warlike prowess bent)
"I will be with you at this tournament."

And when the clear and lucid sun again
Its shining glories all abroad had spread,
The beauteous lady armed, and warriors twain,
Having first couriers to the city sped,
Who, when 'twas time, reported to the train,
That, to see truncheons split in contest dread,
King Norandine had come into the square
In which the cruel games appointed were.

Straight to the city ride the martial band,
And, through the high street, to the crowded place:
Where, waiting for the royal signal, stand,
Ranged here and there the knights of gentle race
The guerdons destined to the conqueror's hand
In that day's tourney, were a tuck and mace
Richly adorned, and, with them, such a steed
As to the winning lord were fitting meed.

Norandine, sure that, in the martial game,
Both prizes destined for the conquering knight,
As well as one and the other tourney's fame,
Must be obtained by Gryphon, named the white,
To give him all that valiant man could claim,
Nor could he give the warrior less, with right,
The armor, guerdon of this final course
Placed with the tuck and mace and noble horse.

But from effecting what he had intended
He was prevented by the warlike maid;
Who late into the crowded square had wended,
With Sansonnet and England's Duke arrayed.
Seeing the arms of which I spoke suspended,
She straight agnized the harness she surveyed,
Once hers, and dear to her; as matters are
Esteemed by us as excellent and rare;

Though, as a hindrance, she upon the road
Had left the arms, when, to retrieve her sword,
She from her shoulders slipt the ponderous load,
And chased Brunello, worthy of the cord.
More to relate were labor ill bestowed,
I deem, nor further of the tale record.
Enough for me, by you 'tis understood,
How here she found anew her armor good.

You shall take with you, when by manifest
And certain tokens they by her were known,
She, for no earthly thing, the iron vest
And weapons for a day would have foregone.
She thinks not if this mode or that be best
To have them, anxious to regain her own;
But t'ward the arms with hand extended hies,
And without more regard takes down the prize.

And throwing some on earth, it chanced that more
Than was her own she in her hurry took.
The Syrian King, who was offended sore,
Raised war against her with a single look.
For ill the wrong his angered people bore,
And, to avenge him, lance and falchion shook;
Remembering not, on other day, how dear
They paid for scathing errant cavalier.

She spurred her courser, and with lance in rest,
Impetuous at the foolish rabble made,
And—through the neck impaled or through the breast—
Some pierced, some prostrate at the encounter laid.
Next this or that she with the falchion prest;
The head from one she severed with the blade,
And from that other cleft; another sank,
Short of right arm or left, or pierced in flank.

Bold Sansonnetto and Astolpho near,
Who had, with her, their limbs in harness dight,
Though they for other end in arms appear,
Seeing the maid and crowd engaged in fight,
First lower the helmet's vizor, next the spear,
And with their lances charge the mob outright;
Then bare their falchions, and, amid the crew,
A passage with the trenchant weapons hew.

The errant cavaliers who to that stage,
To joust, from different lands had made resort,
Seeing them warfare with such fury wage,
And into mourning changed the expected sport,
Because all knew not what had moved the rage
Of the infuriate people in that sort,
Nor what the insult offered to the King,
Suspended stood in doubt and wondering.

Of these, some will the crowded rabble's band
(Too late repentant of the feat) befriend;
Those, favoring not the natives of the land
More than the foreigners, to part them wend.
Others more wary, with their reins in hand,
Sit watching how the mischief is to end.
Gryphon and Aquilant are of the throng,
Which hurry forward to avenge the wrong.

The pair of warlike brethren witnessing
The monarch's drunken eyes with venom fraught,
And having heard from many in the ring
The occasion which the furious strife had wrought,
Himself no whit less injured than the king
Of Syria's land, offended Gryphon thought.
Each knight, in haste, supplied himself with spear,
And thundering vengeance drove in full career.

On Rabican pricked forth before his band
Valiant Astolpho, from the other bound,
With the enchanted lance of gold in hand,
Which at the first encounter bore to ground
What knights he smote with it; and on the sand
Laid Gryphon first; next Aquilant he found,
And scarcely touched the border of his shield,
Ere he reversed the warrior on the field.

From lofty saddle Sansonnet o'erthrew,
Famous for price and prowess, many a knight.
To the outlet of the square the mob withdrew;
The monarch raged with anger and despite.
Meanwhile, of the first cuirass and the new
Possest, as well as either helmet bright,
Marphisa, when she all in flight discerned,
Conqueror toward her suburb-inn returned.

Sansonnet and Astolpho are not slow
In following t'ward the gate the martial maid
(The mob dividing all to let them go),
And halt when they have reached the barricade.
Gryphon and Aquilant, who saw with woe
Themselves on earth at one encounter laid,
Their drooping heads, opprest with shame, decline,
Nor dare appear before King Norandine.

Seizing their steeds and mounting, either son
Of Oliver to seek their foemen went:
With many of his vassals too is gone
The King; on death or vengeance all intent.
The foolish rabble cry, "Lay on! lay on!"
And stand at distance and await the event.
Gryphon arrived where the three friends had gained
A bridge, and facing round the post maintained.

He, at the first approach, Astolpho knew,
For still the same device had been his wear,
Even from the day he charmed Orrilo slew,
His horse, his arms the same; him not with care
Sir Gryphon had remarked, nor steadfast view,
When late he jousted with him in the square;
He knows him here and greets; next prays him show
Who the companions are that with him go;

And why they had those arms, without the fear
Of Syria's King, pulled down, and to his slight.
Of his companions England's cavalier
Sir Gryphon courteously informed aright.
But little of those arms, pursued the peer,
He knew, which were the occasion of the fight;
But (for he thither with Marphisa came
And Sansonnet) had armed to aid the dame.

While he and Gryphon stood in colloquy,
Aquilant came, and knew Astolpho good,
Whom he heard speaking with his brother nigh,
And, though of evil purpose, changed his mood.
Of Norandine's trooped many, these to spy;
But came not nigh the warriors where they stood;
And seeing them in conference, stood clear,
Listening, in silence, and intent to hear.

Some one who hears Marphisa bold is there,
Famed through the world for matchless bravery,
His courser turns, and bids the King have care,
Save he would lose his Syrian chivalry,
To snatch his court, before all slaughtered are,
From the hand of Death and of Tisiphone:
For that 'twas verily Marphisa, who
Had borne away the arms in public view.

As Norandine is told that name of dread,
Through the Levant so feared on every side,
Whose mention made the hair on many a head
Bristle, though she was often distant wide,
He fears the ill may happen which is said,
Unless against the mischief he provide;
And hence his meiny, who have changed their ire
Already into fear, he bids retire.

The sons of Oliver, on the other hand,
With Sansonetto and the English knight,
So supplicate Marphisa, she her brand
Puts up, and terminates the cruel fight;
And to the monarch next, amid his band,
Cries proudly, "Sir, I know not by what right
Thou wouldst this armor, not thine own, present
To him who conquers in thy tournament.

"Mine are these arms, which I, upon a day,
Left on the road that leads from Armeny,
Because, perforce a-foot, I sought to stay
A robber, who had sore offended me.
The truth of this my ensign may display,
Which here is seen, if it be known to thee."
With that she on the plate that sheathed the breast
(Cleft in three places) showed a crown imprest.

"To me this an Armenian merchant gave,
'Tis true," replied the King, some days ago;
And had you raised your voice, the arms to crave,
You should have had them, whether yours or no.
For, notwithstanding I to Gryphon gave
The armor, I so well his nature know,
He freely would resign the gift he earned,
That it by me to you might be returned.

"Your allegation needs not to persuade
These arms are yours—that they your impress bear;
Your word suffices me, by me more weighed
Than all that other witness could declare.
To grant them yours is but a tribute paid
To Virtue, worthy better prize to wear.
Now have the arms, and let us make accord;
And let some fairer gift the knight reward."

Gryphon, who little had those arms at heart,
But much to satisfy the King was bent,
Replied: "You recompense enough impart,
Teaching me how your wishes to content."
"Here is my honor all at stake," apart,
"Me seemeth," said Marphisa, and forewent
Her claim for Gryphon's sake, with courteous cheer;
And, as his gift, in fine received the gear.

To the city, their rejoicings to renew,
In love and peace they measured back their way.
Next came the joust, of which the honor due,
And prize was Sansonnet's; since from the fray
Abstained Astolpho and the brethren two,
And bold Marphisa, best of that array,
Like faithful friends and good companions; fain
That Sansonnet the tourney's meed should gain.

Eight days or ten in joy and triumph dwell
The knights with Norandine; but with such strong
Desire of France the warriors' bosoms swell,
Which will not let them thence be absent long,
They take their leave. Marphisa, who as well
Thither would go, departs the troop among.
Marphisa had long time, with sword and lance,
Desired to prove the paladins of France,

And make experiment, if they indeed
Such worth as is by Rumor voiced display.
Sansonnet leaves another, in his stead,
The city of Jerusalem to sway,
And now these five, in chosen squadron, speed,
Who have few peers in prowess, on their way.
Dismissed by Norandine to Tripoli
They wend, and to the neighboring haven hie.

The island of the amorous deity
Breathed upon them an air, in her first port,
Which not alone to man does injury,
But moulders iron; and here life is short—
A marsh the cause—and Nature certainly
Wrongs Famagosta, poisoning, in such sort,
That city with Constantia's fen malign,
To all the rest of Cyprus so benign.

'Twas here they heard the same which they before
Of the orc and of Lucina, erst had heard
In Syria; how she to return once more
In Nicosia, to her lord prepared.
Thence (a fair wind now blowing from the shore)
His bark for sea the ready Patron cleared,
Hauled up his anchor, westward turned the head
Of the good ship, and all his canvas spread.

The cruel wind increased throughout the night,
Which grew more dismal and more dark than hell.
The wary Patron stood to sea outright,
Where he believed less broken was the swell;
And turned his prow to meet, with ready sleight,
The buffets of the dreadful waves that fell;
Never without some hope, that at daybreak
The storm might lull, or else its fury slake.

While Fortune on the sea annoys this crew,
She grants those others small repose by land,
Those left in France, who one another slew—
The men of England and the paynim band.
These bold Rinaldo broke and overthrew;
Nor troops nor banners spread before him stand.
I speak of him, who his Bayardo fleet
Had spurred the gallant Dardinel to meet.

The shield, of which Almontes' son was vain,
That of the quarters, good Rinaldo spied;
And deemed him bold, and of a valiant strain,
Who with Orlando's ensign dared to ride.
Approaching nearer, this appeared more plain,
When heaps of slaughtered men he round him eyed.
"Better it were," he cried, "to overthrow
This evil plant, before it shoot and grow.

"I seek thee out to prove (if thou attend
My coming) how thou keep'st the red and white,
For thou, save this from me thou canst defend,
Canst ill defend it from Orlando's might."
To him the King: "Now clearly comprehend
I what I bear, as well defend in fight;
And I more honor hope than trouble dread
From my paternal quartering, white and red.

"Have thou no hope to make me fly, or yield
To thee my quarters, though a childe I be;
My life shalt thou take from me, if my shield;
But I, in God, well hope the contrary.
This as it may!—shall none, in fighting field,
Say that I ever shamed my ancestry."
So said, and grasping in his hand the sword,
The youthful King assailed Mount Alban's lord.

Rinaldo smiled and said: "I'd have thee know
"If I am better skilled to find the vein."
He spurs, and lets with that the bridle go,
And a thrust pushes with such might and main—
A thrust aganist the bosom of his foe,
That at his back the blade appears again.
Forth issues blood and soul, and from his sell
Lifeless and cold the reeling body fell.

As waters will sometime their course delay,
Stagnant, and penned in pool by human skill,
Which, when the opposing dyke is broke away,
Fall, and with mighty noise the country fill:
'Twas so the Africans, who had some stay,
While Dardinello valor did instil,
Fled here and there, dismayed on every side,
When they him hurtling from his sell descried.

Letting the flyers fly, of those who stand
  Firm in their place Rinaldo breaks the array;
Ariodantes kills on every hand,
  Who ranks well nigh Rinaldo on that day.
These Leonetto's, those Zerbino's brand
  O'erturns, all rivals in the glorious fray.
Well Charles and Oliver their parts have done,
Turpin and Ogier, Guido and Salomon.

In peril were the Moors, that none again
  Should visit Heatheness, that day opprest;
But that the wise and wary king of Spain
  Gathered and from the field bore off the rest;
To sit down with his loss he better gain
  Esteemed, than here to hazard purse and vest;
Better some remnant of the host to save,
Than bid whole squadrons stand and find a grave.

That King, who deemed himself in desperate case,
  Nor ever more Biserta hoped to see;
For, with so horrible and foul a face
  He never Fortune had beheld, with glee
Heard that Marsilius had contrived to place
  Part of his host in full security;
And faced about his banners and bade beat
Throughout his broken squadrons a retreat.

But the best portion neither signal knew,
  Nor listened to the drum or trumpet's sound.
So scared, so crowded is the wretched crew,
  That many in Seine's neighboring stream are drowned.
Agramant, who would form the band anew,
  (With him Sobrino) scours the squadrons round;
And with them every leader good combines
To bring the routed host within their lines.

And even within their lines, in panic sore,
  They by the Christian bands are held in chase;
And of all needful matters little store
  Was made there, for provisioning the place.
Charlemagne wisely by the lock before
  Would grapple Fortune, when she turned her face,
But that dark night upon the field descended,
And hushed all earthly matters and suspended;

By the Creator haply hastened, who
  Was moved to pity for the works he made.
The blood in torrents ran the country through,
  Flooding the roads; while on the champaign laid
Were eighty thousand of the paynim crew,
  Cut off that day by the destroying blade;
Last trooped from caverns, at the midnight hour,
Villain and wolf to spoil them and devour.

Two Moors amid the paynim army were
From stock obscure in Ptolomita grown;
Of whom the story, an example rare
  Of constant love, is worthy to be known:
Medoro and Cloridan were named the pair;
  Who, whether Fortune pleased to smile or frown,
Served Dardinello with fidelity,
And late with him to France had crossed the sea.

These two were posted on a rampart's height,
  With more to guard the encampment from surprise,
When 'mid the equal intervals, at night,
  Medoro gazed on heaven with sleepy eyes.
In all his talk, the stripling, woful wight,
  Here cannot choose but of his lord devise,
The royal Dardinel; and evermore
Him, left unhonored on the field, deplore.

Then, turning to his mate, cries: "Cloridane,
  I cannot tell thee what a cause of woe
It is to me, my lord upon the plain
  Should lie, unworthy food for wolf or crow!
Thinking how still to me he was humane,
  Meseems, if in his honor I forego
This life of mine, for favors so immense
I shall but make a feeble recompense.

"That he may lack not sepulture, will I
  Go forth, and seek him out among the slain;
And haply God may will that none shall spy
  Where Charles's camp lies hushed. Do thou remain;
That, if my death be written in the sky,
  Thou may'st the deed be able to explain.
So that if Fortune foil so fair a feat,
The world, through Fame, my loving heart may weet."

Seeing that nought would bend him, nought would move,
  "I too will go," was Cloridan's reply,
"In such a glorious act myself will prove;
  As well such famous death I covet, I
What other thing is left me, here above,
  Deprived of thee, Medoro mine? To die
With thee in arms is better, on the plain,
Than afterward of grief, should'st thou be slain."

And thus resolved, disposing in their place
  Their guard's relief, depart the youthful pair,
Leave fosse and palisade, and, in small space,
  Are among ours, who watch with little care;
Who, for they little fear the paynim race,
  Slumber with fires extinguished everywhere.
'Mid carriages and arms, they lie supine,
Up to the eyes immersed in sleep and wine.

A moment Cloridano stopt and said:
"Not to be lost are opportunities.
This troop, by whom my master's blood was shed,
Medoro, ought not I to sacrifice?
Do thou, lest any one this way be led,
Watch everywhere about, with ears and eyes,
For a wide way, amid the hostile horde,
I offer here to make thee with my sword."

So said he, and his talk cut quickly short,
Coming where learned Alpheus slumbered nigh;
Who had the year before sought Charles's court,
In medicine, magic, and astrology
Well versed; but now in art found small support,
Or rather found that it was all a lie.
He had foreseen that he his long-drawn life
Should finish in the bosom of his wife.

And now the Saracen with wary view
Has pierced his weasand with the pointed sword,
Four others he, near that Diviner, slew,
Nor gave the wretches time to say a word.
Sir Turpin in his story tells not who,
And Time has of their names effaced record.
Palidon of Moncalier next he speeds,
One who securely sleeps between two steeds.

Next came the warrior where, with limbs outspread,
Pillowed on barrel, lay the wretched Gryll:
This he had drained, and undisturbed by dread
Hoped to enjoy a peaceful sleep and still.
The daring Saracen lopped off his head,
Blood issues from the tap-hole, with a rill
Of wine; and he, well drenched with many a can,
Dreams that he drinks, despatched by Cloridan.

Next Gryll, Andropono and Conrad hight,
A Greek and German, at two thrusts he gored,
Who in the air had passed large part of night
With dice and goblet; blest if at that board
They still had watched, till, clothed in amber light,
The radiant sun had traversed Indus' ford!
But mortals Destiny would set at nought
If every wight futurity were taught.

As, in full fold, a lion long unfed,
Whom wasting famine has made lean and spare,
Devours and rends, and swallows, and lays dead
The feeble flock, which at his mercy are;
So, in their sleep, the cruel paynim bled
Our host, and made wide slaughter everywhere:
Nor blunted was the young Medoro's sword,
But he disdained to smite the ignoble horde.

He to Labretto's Duke, leaving those dead,
Had come, who slumbered with a gentle mate,
Each clasping each so closely in their bed,
That air between them could not penetrate.
From both Medoro cleanly lopped the head,
Oh, blessed way of death! oh, happy fate!
For 'tis my trust that as their bodies so
Their souls embracing to their bourne shall go.

Malindo, with Andalico, he slew,
His brother, sons to the Earl of Flanders they;
To whom as bearings (each to arms was new)
Charles had the lilies given; because that day
The monarch had beheld the valiant two
With crimsoned staves, returning from the fray;
And them with lands in Flanders vowed to glad;
And would, but that Medoro this forbade.

Rearing the insidious blade, the pair are near
The place where round King Charles's pavilion
Are tented warlike paladin and peer,
Guarding the side that each is camped upon.
When in good time the paynims backward steer,
And sheathe their swords, the impious slaughter done;
Deeming impossible, in such a number,
But they must light on one that does not slumber.

CANTO XVI

So far was Cloridan advanced before,
He heard the boy no longer in the wind:
But when he marked the absence of Medore,
It seemed as if his heart was left behind.
"Ah! how was I so negligent," the Moor
Exclaimed, "so far beside myself, and blind,
That I, Medoro, should without thee fare,
Nor know when I deserted thee or where?"

So saying, in the wood he disappears,
Plunging into the maze with hurried pace;
And thither, whence he lately issued, steers,
And, desperate, of death returns in trace.
Cries and the tread of steeds this while he hears,
And word and threat of foemen, as in chase;
Lastly Medoro by his voice is known,
Disarmed, on foot, 'mid many horse, alone.

A hundred horsemen who the youth surround,
Zerbino leads, and bids his followers seize
The stripling; like a top, the boy turns round
And keeps him as he can; among the trees,
Behind oak, elm, beech, ash, he takes his ground,
Nor from the cherished load his shoulders frees.
Wearied, at length, the burden he bestowed
Upon the grass, and stalked about his load.

Cloridan, who to aid him knows not how,
And with Medoro willingly would die,
But who would not for death this being forego,
Until more foes than one should lifeless lie,
Ambushed, his sharpest arrow to his bow
Fits, and directs it with so true an eye,
The feathered weapon bores a Scotchman's brain,
And lays the warrior dead upon the plain.

Together, all the others of the band
Turned thither, whence was shot the murderous reed;
Meanwhile he launched another from his stand,
That a new foe might by the weapon bleed,
Whom (while he made of this and that demand,
And loudly questioned who had done the deed)
The arrow reached, transfixed the wretch's throat,
And cut his question short in middle note.

Zerbino, captain of those horse, no more
Can at the piteous sight his wrath refrain;
In furious heat, he springs upon Medore,
Exclaiming, "Thou of this shalt bear the pain."
One hand he in his locks of golden ore
Enwreaths, and drags him to himself amain;
But, as his eyes that beauteous face survey,
Takes pity on the boy, and does not slay.

To him the stripling turns, with supplicant cry,
And "By thy God, Sir knight," exclaims, "I pray,
Be not so passing cruel, nor deny
That I in earth my honored King may lay:
No other grace I supplicate, nor I
This for the love of life, believe me, say.
So much, no longer, space of life I crave,
As may suffice to give my lord a grave.

"And if you needs must feed the beast and bird,
Like Theban Creon, let their worst be done
Upon these limbs; so that by me interred
In earth be those of good Almontes' son."
Medoro thus his suit, with grace, preferred,
And words, to move a mountain; and so won
Upon Zerbino's mood, to kindness turned,
With love and pity he all over burned.

This while a churlish horseman of the band,
Who little deference for his lord confest,
His lance uplifting, wounded overhand
The unhappy supplicant in his dainty breast.
Zerbino, who the cruel action scanned,
Was deeply stirred, the rather that, opprest
And livid with the blow the churl had sped,
Medoro fell as he was wholly dead.

So grieved Zerbino, with such wrath was stung,
"Not unavenged shalt thou remain," he cries;
Then full of evil will in fury sprung
Upon the author of the foul emprize.
But he his vantage marks, and, from among
The warriors, in a moment slips and flies.
Cloridan, who beholds the deed, at sight
Of young Medoro's fall, springs forth to fight;

And casts away his bow, and 'mid the band
Of foemen whirls his falchion, in desire
Rather of death, than hoping that his hand
May snatch a vengeance equal to his ire.
Amid so many blades, he views the sand
Tinged with his blood, and ready to expire,
And feeling he the sword no more can guide,
Lets himself drop by his Medoro's side.

By chance arrived a damsel at the place
Who was (though mean and rustic was her wear)
Of royal presence and of beauteous face,
And lofty manners, sagely debonair.
Her have I left unsung so long a space,
That you will hardly recognise the fair.
Angelica, in her (if known not) scan,
The lofty daughter of Catay's great Khan.

When fair Angelica the stripling spies,
Nigh hurt to death in that disastrous fray,
Who for his king, that there unsheltered lies,
More sad than for his own misfortune lay,
She feels new pity in her bosom rise,
Which makes its entry in unwonted way.
Touched was her haughty heart, once hard and curst,
And more when he his piteous tale rehearsed.

She recollects an herb had caught her sight
In passing hither, on a pleasant plain.
What (whether dittany or pansy hight)
I know not; fraught with virtue to restrain
The crimson blood forth-welling, and of might
To sheathe each perilous and piercing pain,
She found it near, and having pulled the weed,
Returned to seek Medoro on the mead.

Returning, she upon a swain did light,
Who was on horseback passing through the wood.
Strayed from the lowing herd, the rustic wight
A heifer, missing for two days, pursued.
Him she with her conducted, where the might
Of the faint youth was ebbing with his blood:
Which had the ground about so deeply dyed,
Life was nigh wasted with the gushing tide.

Angelica alights upon the ground,
And he her rustic comrade, at her hest.
She hastened 'twixt two stones the herb to pound,
Then took it, and the healing juice exprest:
With this did she foment the stripling's wound,
And, even to the hips, his waist and breast;
And (with such virtue was the salve endued)
It stanched his life-blood and his strength renewed.

And into him infused such force again,
That he could mount the horse the swain conveyed;
But good Medoro would not leave the plain
Till he in earth had seen his master laid.
He, with the monarch, buried Cloridane,
And after followed whither pleased the maid,
Who was to stay with him, by pity led,
Beneath the courteous shepherd's humble shed.

Nor would the damsel quit the lowly pile
(So she esteemed the youth) till he was sound;
Such pity first she felt, when him erewhile
She saw outstretched and bleeding on the ground.
Touched by his mien and manners next, a file
She felt corrode her heart with secret wound;
She felt corrode her heart, and with desire,
By little and by little warmed, took fire.

The shepherd dwelt between two mountains hoar,
In goodly cabin, in the greenwood-shade,
With wife and children; in short time before,
The brent-new shed had builded in the glade.
Here of his grisly wound the youthful Moor
Was briefly healed by the Catayan maid;
But who in briefer space, a sorer smart
Than young Medoro's, suffered at her heart.

Her ill but festered and increased the more
The stripling's wounds were seen to heal and close:
The youth grew lusty, while she suffered sore,
And, with new fever parched, now burnt, now froze.
From day to day in beauty waxed Medore;
She miserably wasted, like the snow's
Unseasonable flake, which melts away
Exposed, in sunny place, to scorching ray.

When she believed they had prolonged their stay
More than enow, the damsel made design
In India to revisit her Catày,
And with its crown Medoro's head entwine.
She had upon her wrist an armlet, gay
With costly gems, in witness and in sign
Of love to her by Count Orlando borne,
And which the damsel for long time had worn.

Marphisa, Astolpho, Gryphon, Aquilant.
Of these and of the others will I tell,
Who, death before their eyes, the vexed Levant
Traverse, and ill resist the boisterous swell.
While, aye more passing proud and arrogant,
Waxes in rage and threat the tempest fell.
And now three days the angry gale has blown,
Nor signal of abatement yet has shown.

They bale and chest and all their heavy lumber
Cast overboard, from poop, and prow, and side
And every berth and cabin disencumber
Of merchandise, to feed the greedy tide.
Water to water others of the number
Rendered, by whom the spouting pumps were plied.
This in the hold bestirs himself, where'er
Planks opened by the beating sea appear.

They in this trouble, in this woe, remained
For full four days; and helpless was their plight,
And a full victory the sea had gained,
If yet a little had endured its spite;
But them with hope of clearer sky sustained
The wished appearance of St. Elmo's light,
Which (every spar was gone) descending glowed
Upon a boat, that in the prow was stowed.

The south wind still remained so passing strong,
And from its sable mouth so fiercely blew,
And bore with it so swift a stream and strong
Of the vexed waters, that it hurried through
Their tumbling waves the shattered bark along,
Faster than gentle falcon ever flew;
And sore the patron feared, to the world's brink
It would transport his bark, or wreck or sink.

They, driven on Syria, in Laiazzo's bay
A mighty city rise; so nigh at hand,
That they can from the vessel's deck survey
Two castles, which the port within command.
Pale turns the patron's visage with dismay,
When he perceives what is the neighboring land,
Who will not to the port for shelter hie,
Nor yet can keep the open sea, nor fly.

Fixed on his course, the pilot passes by
  Cyprus and Rhodes, and ploughs the Ægean sea;
Beholds a hundred islands from him fly,
  And Malea's fearful headland; fanned by free
And constant wind, sees vanish from the eye
  The Greek Morea; rounding Sicily,
Into the Tuscan sea his frigate veers,
And, coasting Italy's fair region, steers.

Last rises Luna, where his family
  Is waiting his return; the patron hoar
Gives thanks to God at having passed the sea
  Without more harm, and makes the well known shore.
Here, offering passage to their company,
  They find a master ready to unmoor
For France, and that same day his pinnace climb;
Thence wafted to Marseilles in little time.

There was not Bradamant, who used to sway
  The land, and had that city in her care,
And who, if present there, to make some stay
  Would have compelled them by her courteous prayer.
They landed there; and that same hour away
  Did bold Marphisa at a venture fare;
Bidding adieu to savage Guido's wife,
And to the four, her comrades in the strife,

Saying she deems unfitting for a knight
  To fare in like great fellowship; that so
The starlings and the doves in flock unite,
  And every beast that fears—the stag and doe;
But hawk and eagle, that in other's might
  Put not their trust, forever singly go;
And lion, bear, and tiger roam alone,
Who fear no prowess greater than their own.

But none with her opine, and, in the lack
  Of a companion, singly must she fare.
So then, alone and friendless, she a track
  Uncouth pursues, and through a wooded lair.
Gryphon the white and Aquilant the black
  Take road more beaten with the other pair;
And on the following day a castle see,
Within which they are harbored courteously.

Courteously I, in outward show, would say;
  For soon the contrary was made appear.
Since he, the castellan, who with display
  Of kindness sheltered them and courteous cheer,
The night ensuing took them as they lay
  Couched in their beds, secure and void of fear.
Nor from the snare would he his prisoners loose,
Till they had sworn to observe an evil use.

But I will first pursue the martial maid,
Ere more of these, fair sir, I shall proclaim.
Beyond the Durence, Rhône, and Saône she strayed,
And to the foot of sunny mountain came;
And there approaching in black gown arrayed,
Beside a torrent, saw an ancient dame;
Who with long journey weak, and wearied sore,
Appeared, but pined by melancholy more.

This was the beldam who had wont to ply
Serving the robbers in the caverned mount;
Whither stern Justice sent (that they might die
By that good paladin) Anglante's Count.
The aged harridan, for cause which I
To you shall in another place recount,
Now many days by path obscure had flown,
Still fearing lest her visage should be known.

The semblance now of foreign cavalier
She in Marphisa saw, in arms and vest;
And hence she flies not her, though wont to fear,
(As being natives of that land) the rest;
Nay, with security and open cheer,
Stops at the ford the damsel to arrest—
Stops at the ford, where that old beldam meets
Marphisa, and with fair encounter greets.

And next implored the maid she of her grace
Would bear her on the croup to the other shore.
Marphisa, who was come of gentle race,
The hag with her across the torrent bore;
And is content to bear, till she can place
In a securer road the beldam hoar,
Clear of a spacious marsh; and at its end
They see a cavalier toward them wend.

In shining armor and in fair array,
The warrior rode on saddle richly wrought
Toward the river, and upon his way
With him a single squire and damsel brought.
Of passing beauty was the lady gay,
But little pleasing was her semblance haught;
All overblown with insolence and pride,
Worthy the cavalier who was her guide.

He of Maganza was a Count, who bore
The lady with him (Pinabello hight)
The same that Bradamant, some months before,
Had plunged into a hollow cave in spite.
Those many sobs, those burning sighs and sore,
Those tears which had nigh quenched the warrior's sight—
All for the damsel were, now at his side;
And then by that false necromancer stied.

But when the magic tower upon the hill
Was razed, the dwelling of Atlantes hoar,
And every one was free to rove at will,
Through Bradamant's good deed and virtuous lore,
The damsel, who had been compliant still
With the desires of Pinabel before,
Rejoined him, and now journeying in a round
With him, from castle was to castle bound.

As wanton and ill-customed, when she spies
Marphisa's aged charge approaching near,
She cannot rein her saucy tongue, but plies
Her, in her petulance, with laugh and jeer.
Marphisa haught, unwont in any wise
Outrage from whatsoever part to hear,
Makes answer to the dame, in angry tone,
That handsomer than her she deems the crone.

And that she this would prove upon her knight
With pact that she might strip the bonnibel
Of gown and palfrey, if, o'erthrown in fight,
Her champion from his goodly courser fell.
In silence to have overpast the slight
Would have been sin and shame in Pinnabel,
Who for short answer seized his shield and spear,
And wheeled, and drove at her in fierce career.

Marphisa grasped a mighty lance, and thrust,
Encountering him, at Pinabello's eyes;
And stretched him so astounded in the dust,
That motionless an hour the warrior lies.
Marphiso, now victorious in the joust,
Gave orders to strip off the glorious guise
And ornaments wherewith the maid was drest,
And with the spoils her ancient crone invest;

And willed that she should don the youthful weed,
Bedizened at the haughty damsel's cost;
And took away as well the goodly steed
Which her had thither borne, and bent to post
On her old track, with her the hag will speed,
Who seems most hideous when adorned the most.
Three days the tedious road the couple beat,
Without adventure needful to repeat.

On the fourth day they met a cavalier,
Who came in fury galloping alone.
If you the stranger's name desire to hear,
I tell you 'twas Zerbino, a king's son,
Of beauty and of worth example rare,
Now grieved and angered, as unvenged of one,
Who a great act of courtesy, which fain
The warrior would have done, had rendered vain.

Vainly the young Zerbino through the glade
Had chased that man of his, who this despite
Had done him, who himself so well conveyed
Away and took such 'vantage in his flight,
So hid by wood and mist which overlaid
The horizon and bedimmed the morning light,
That he escaped Zerbino's grasp, and lay
Concealed until his wrath was passed away.

Zerbino laughed perforce, when he descried
That beldam's face, though he was full of rage;
For too ill sorted seemed her vest of pride
With her foul visage, more deformed by age:
And to the proud Marphiso, at her side
The Prince exclaimed, "Sir warrior, you are sage,
In having chosen damsel of a sort
Whom none, I ween, will grudge you should escort."

Older than Sibyl seemed the beldam hoar,
(As far as from her wrinkles one might guess)
And in the youthful ornaments she wore,
Looked like an ape that men in mockery dress;
And now appears more foul, as angered sore,
While rage and wrath her kindled eyes express.
For none can do a woman worse despite
Than to proclaim her old and foul to sight.

To have sport of him—as she had—an air
Of wrath the maid assumed upon her part,
And to the Prince, "By Heaven, more passing fair
Is this my lady than thou courteous art,"
Exclaimed in answer, "Though I am aware
What thou hast uttered comes not from thy heart,
Thou wilt not own her beauty; a device
Put on to masque thy sovereign cowardice.

"And of what stamp would be that cavalier
Who found such fair and youthful dame alone,
Without protection, in the forest drear,
Nor sought to make the lovely weft his own?"
"So well she sorts with thee," replied the peer,
'Twere ill that she were claimed by any one;
Nor I of her would thee in any wise
Deprive; God rest thee merry with thy prize!

"But wouldst thou prove what is my chivalry
On other ground I to thy wish incline;
Yet deem me not of such perversity
As to tilt with thee for this prize of thine.
Or fair or foul, let her remain thy fee;
I would not, I, such amity disjoin.
Well are ye paired, and safely would I swear
That thou as valiant art as she is fair."

To him Marphisa: "Thou in thy despite
Shalt try to bear from me the dame away.
I will not suffer that so fair a sight
Thou shouldst behold, nor seek to gain the prey."
To her the Prince, "I know not wherefore wight
Should suffer pain and peril in affray,
Striving for victory, where, for his pains
The victor loses, and the vanquished gains."

"If this condition please not, other course
Which ill thou canst refuse, I offer thee,"
Marphisa cried. "If thou shalt me unhorse
In this our tourney, she remains with me:
But if I win, I give her thee perforce.
Then prove we now who shall without her be,
Premised, if loser, thou shalt be her guide,
Wherever it may please the dame to ride."

"And be it so," Zerbino cried, and wheeled
Swiftly his foaming courser for the shock,
And rising in his stirrups scoured the field,
Firm in his seat, and smote, with leveled stock,
For surer aim, the damsel in mid-shield;
But she sat steadfast as a metal rock,
And at the warrior's morion thrust so well,
She clean out-bore him senseless from the sell.

Much grieved the Prince, to whom in other fray
The like misfortune had not chanced before.
Who had unhorsed some thousands in his day:
Now shamed, he thought forever. Troubled sore,
And mute long space upon the ground he lay,
And, when 'twas recollected, grieved the more,
That he had promised, and that he was bound,
To accompany the hag where'er she wound.

Turning about to him the victress cried,
Laughing, "This lady I to thee present,
And the more beauty is in her descried,
The more that she is thine I am content,
Now in my place her champion and her guide.
But do not thou thy plighted faith repent,
So that thou fail, as promised, to attend,
The dame, wherever she may please to wend."

Without awaiting answer, to career
She spurred her horse, and vanished in the wood.
Zerbino, deeming her a cavalier,
Cried to the crone, "By whom am I subdued?"
And, knowing 'twould be poison to his ear,
And that it would inflame his angered blood,
She in reply, "It was a damsel's blow
That from thy lofty saddle laid thee low.

"She, for her matchless force, deservedly
Usurps from cavalier the sword and lance;
And even from the east is come to try
Her strength against the paladins of France."
Not only was his cheek of crimson dye,
Such shame Zerbino felt at his mischance,
Little was wanting (so his blushes spread)
But all the arms he wore had glowed as red.

He mounts, and blames himself in angry wise,
In that he had no better kept his seat.
Within herself the beldam laughs, and tries
The Scottish warrior more to sting and heat.
To him for promised convoy she applies;
And he, who knows that there is no retreat,
Stands like tired courser, who in pensive fit,
Hangs down his ears, controlled by spur and bit,

And, sighing deeply, cries, in his despair,
"Fell Fortune, with what change dost thou repay
My loss! she who was fairest of the fair,
Who should be mine, by thee is snatched away!
And thinkest thou the evil to repair
With her whom thou hast given me this day?
Rather than make like ill exchange, less cross
It were to undergo a total loss.

"Her, who for virtue and for beauteous form
Was never equaled, nor will ever be,
Thou on the rocks hast wrecked, in wintry storm,
As food for fowls and fishes of the sea;
And her who should have fed the earth-bred worm
Thou hast delivered from her destiny;
Perceived beyond her date, some ten or score
Of years, to harass and torment me more."

So spake Zerbino, and like grief displayed,
In his despairing words and woful mien,
For such an odious acquisition made,
As he had suffered when he lost his queen.
The aged woman now, from what he said,
Though she before Zerbino had not seen,
Perceived 'twas he of whom, in the thieves' hold,
Isabel of Galicia erst had told.

If you remember what was said before,
This was the hag who 'scaped out of the cave,
Where Isabella, who had wounded sore
Zerbino's heart, was long detained a slave;
Who oft had told how she her native shore
Had left, and, launching upon ocean's wave
Her frigate, had been wrecked by wind and swell
Upon the rocky shallows near Rochelle.

The beldam, hearing what in rage and grief
  Zerbino vents, perceives the youth to be
Deceived, and cheated by the false belief
  That Isabel had perished in the sea;
And though she might have given the Prince relief,
  Knowing the truth, in her perversity
What would have made him joyful she concealed,
And only what would cause him grief revealed.

"Hear, you that are so proud," the hag pursues,
  "And flout me with such insolence and scorn,
You would entreat me fair to have the news
  I know of her whose timeless death you mourn;
But to be strangled would I rather choose,
  And be into a thousand pieces torn.
Whereas if you had made me kinder cheer,
Haply from me the secret might you hear."

As the dog's rage is quickly overblown,
  Who flies the approaching robber to arrest,
If the thief proffer piece of bread or bone,
  Or offer other lure that likes him best;
As readily Zerbino to the crone
  Humbled himself, and burned to know the rest;
Who, in the hints of that old woman, read
That she had news of her he mourned as dead.

And with more winning mien to her applied,
  And her did supplicate, entreat, conjure,
By men and gods, the truth no more to hide,
  Did she benign or evil lot endure.
The hard and pertinacious crone replied,
  "Nought shalt thou hear, thy comfort to assure.
Isabel has not yielded up her breath,
But lives a life she would exchange for death."

At length Zerbino to his tongue gave rest,
  Since speaking to the woman booted nought;
Scarcely his heart found room within his breast,
  Such dread suspicion had her story wrought.
He to find Isabella was so pressed,
  Her in the midst of fire he would have sought;
But could not hurry more than was allowed
By her his convoy, since he so had vowed.

CANTO XVII

Zerbino entered in a narrow way,
From which was heard a cry; nor far had hied,
Ere to a vale he came shut out from day,
Where he before him a dead knight espied.
Who I shall tell; but first I must away
From France, in the Levant to wander wide
Till I the paladin Astolpho find,
Who westward had his course from thence inclined.

I in a cruel city left the peer,
Whence, with the formidable bugle's roar,
He chased the unfaithful people in their fear,
And thus preserved himself from peril sore;
And with the sound he made his comrades rear
Their sail, and fly with noted scorn that shore.
Now following him, I say, the warrior took
The Armenian road, and so that land forsook.

He, after some few days, in Natoly
Finds himself, and toward Brusa goes his ways;
Hence wending, on the hither side of the sea,
Makes Thrace; through Hungary by the Danube lays
His course, and, as his horse had wings to flee,
Traverses in less time than twenty days
Both the Moravian and Bohemian line:
Threaded Franconia next, and crossed the Rhine.

He, traversing a forest, at the feet
Of a fair hill, arrived beside a fount,
What time the sheep foregoes his grassy meat,
Penned in the cabin or the hollow mount;
And, overcome by feverish thirst and heat,
Lifted the weighty morion from his front;
Tethered his courser in the thickest wood,
And, with intent to drink, approached the flood.

His lips he had not wetted in its bed
Before a youthful rustic, ambushed near,
Sprang from a copse, backed Rabican, and fled
With the good courser of the cavalier.
Astolpho hears the noise and lifts his head,
And, when he sees his mighty loss so clear,
Satiate, although he has not drunk, upstarts,
And after the young churl in fury darts.

That robber did not let the courser strain
At speed, or he had from the warrior shot;
But loosening now and tightening now the rein,
Fled at a gallop or a steady trot.
From the deep forest issued forth the twain,
After long round, and reached in fine the spot
Where so many illustrious lords were shent,
Worse prisoners they than if in prison pent.

Astolpho, wearied now with wandering wide,
Perceived the place was by enchantment wrought,
And of the book he carried at his side,
By Logistilla given in India, thought;
Bestowed, should new enchantment him betide,
That needful succor might therein be sought.
He to the index turns, and quickly sees
What pages show the proper remedies.

I' the book, of that enchanted house at large
Was written, and in this was taught the way
To foil the enchanter, and to set at large
The different prisoners, subject to his sway.
Of these illusions and these frauds in charge,
A spirit pent beneath the threshold lay;
And the stone raised which kept him fast below,
With him the palace into smoke would go.

Astolpho, with desire to bring to end
An enterprise so passing fair, delays
No more, but to the task his force does bend,
And prove how much the heavy marble weighs.
As old Atlantes sees the knight intend
To bring to scorn his art and evil ways,
Suspicious of the ill which may ensue,
He moves to assail him with enchantments new.

He, with his spells and shapes of devilish kind,
Makes the Duke different from his wont appear;
To one a giant, and to one a hind,
To other an ill-visaged cavalier;
Each, in the form which in the thicket blind
The false enchanter wore, beholds the peer.
So that they all, with purpose to have back
What the magician took, the Duke attack.

The childe, Gradasso, Iroldo, Bradamant,
Prasildo, Brandimart, and many more,
All, cheated by this new illusion, pant
To slay the English baron, angered sore;
But he abased their pride and haughty vaunt,
Who straight bethought him of the horn he bore.
But for the succor of its echo dread,
They, without fail, had laid Astolpho dead.

But he no sooner has the bugle wound
And poured a horrid larum, than in guise
Of pigeons at the musket's scaring sound,
The troop of cavaliers affrighted flies.
No less the necromancer starts astound,
No less he from his den in panic hies; es;
Troubled and pale, and hurrying evermore
Till out of hearing of the horrid roar.

The warder fled; with him his prisoned train
And many steeds as well are fled and gone;
These more than rope is needed to restrain,
Who after their astounded masters run,
Scared by the sound; nor cat nor mouse remain
Who seem to hear in it, *Lay on! lay on!*
Rabican with the rest had burst his bands,
But that he fell into Astolpho's hands.

He, having chased the enchanter Moor away,
Upraised the heavy threshold from the ground;
Beneath which figures and more matters lay
That I omit; desirous to confound
The spell that did the magic dome upstay,
The Duke made havoc of whate'er he found,
As him the book he carried taught to do;
And into mist and smoke all past from view.

There he found fastened by a golden chain
Rogero's famous courser, *him* I say
Given by the wizard, that to the domain
Of false Alcina him he might convey:
On which, equipped with Logistilla's rein,
To France Rogero had retraced his way,
And had from Ind to England rounded all
The right-hand side of the terrestrial ball.

Minded to take the hippogryph, he flung
The saddle on him, which lay near, and bitted
The steed, by choosing, all the reins among,
This part or that, until his mouth was fitted:
For in that place were many bridles hung,
Belonging to the coursers that had flitted.
And now alone, intent upon his flight,
The thought of Rabicane detained the knight.

He stood upon the watch if he could view
Some hunter in the forest, or some hind,
To whom he might commit the charge, and who
Might to some city lead the horse behind.
He waited all that day and till the new
Had dawned, when, while the twilight yet was blind,
He thought he saw, as he expecting stood,
A cavalier approaching through the wood.

But it behoves that, ere the rest I say,
I Bradamant and good Rogero find.
After the horn had ceased, and, far away,
The beauteous pair had left the dome behind,
Rogero looked, and knew what till that day
He had seen not, by Atlantes rendered blind,
Atlantes had effected by his power,
They should not know each other till that hour.

Rogero looks on Bradamant, and she
  Looks on Rogero in profound surprise
That for so many days that witchery
  Had so obscured her altered mind and eyes.
Rejoiced, Rogero clasps his lady free,
  Crimsoning with deeper than the rose's dyes,
And his fair love's first blossoms, while he clips
The gentle damsel, gathers from her lips.

A thousand times they their embrace renew,
  And closely each is by the other prest;
While so delighted are those lovers two,
  Their joys are ill contained within their breast.
Deluded by enchantments, much they rue
  That while they were within the wizard's rest,
They should not e'er have one another known,
And have so many happy days foregone.

The gentle Bradamant, who was i' the vein
  To grant whatever prudent virgin might,
To solace her desiring lover's pain,
  So that her honor should receive no slight,
If the last fruits he of her love would gain,
  Nor find her ever stubborn, bade the knight,
Her of Duke Ayman through fair mean demand,
But be baptized before he claimed her hand.

Rogero good, who not alone to be
  A Christian for the love of her were fain,
As his good sire had been, and anciently
  His grandsire and his whole illustrious strain,
But for her pleasure would immediately
  Resign whatever did of life remain,
Says, "I not only, if 'tis thy desire,
Will be baptized by water, but by fire."

When she had put to death the treacherous peer,
  Who to put her to death had erst intent,
To seek Rogero she again would steer,
  But that her cruel fate would not consent;
Which, where the wood was loneliest, and most drear,
  To wander by close path the lady sent,
Until the western sun withdrew its light,
Abandoning the world above to night.

Nor knowing where for shelter she should rove,
  Bradamant in that place resolves to stay,
Couched on the verdant herbage of the grove;
  And, sleeping, now awaits the dawn of day,
Now watching Saturn, Venus, Mars, and Jove,
  And the other wandering gods upon their way:
But, whether waking or to sleep resigned,
Has aye Rogero present to her mind.

Next morn she rode forth from the greenwood trees,
And issued where the dome was erst displayed
And many days her with such witcheries
The evil-minded wizard had delayed.
Here she Astolpho found, who at full ease
A bridle for the hippogryph had made,
And here was standing, thoughtful and in pain
To whom he should deliver Rabicane.

By chance she found him, as the cavalier
Had from the helm uncased his head to view;
So that when of the dingy forest clear,
Fair Bradamant her gentle cousin knew.
Him from afar she hailed with joyful cheer,
And now more nigh, to embrace the warrior flew;
And named herself, and raised her vizor high,
And let him plainly who she was espy.

Embracing twice or thrice the cousins stand,
Fraternally, each other's neck, and they
Had of each other's welfare made demand
With much affection, ere the Duke 'gan say;
"Would I now see the winged people's land,
Here upon earth I make too long delay."
And opening to the dame the thought he brewed,
To her the flying horse Astolpho shewed.

But she scarce marveled when above the plain
She saw the rising steed his wings unfold;
Since upon former time, with mastering rein,
On him had charged the dame that wizard old;
And made her eye and eyelid sorely strain,
So hard she gazed, his movements to behold;
The day that he bore off, with wondrous range,
Rogero on his journey, long and strange.

Astolpho says, On her he will bestow
His Rabican; so passing swift of kind,
That, if the courser started when a bow
Was drawn, he left the feathered shaft behind;
And will as well his panoply forego,
That it may to Mount Alban be consigned;
And she for him preserve the martial weed;
Since of his arms he has no present need.

Backed by Astolpho, and ascending slow,
The hippogryph through yielding æther flew;
And next the rider stirred the courser so,
That in a thought he vanished out of view.
Thus with his pilot does the patron go.
Fearing the gale and rock, till he is through
The reefs; then, having left the shore behind,
Hoists every sail, and shoots before the wind.

Here standing in suspense, by chance she spied
A churl, that came toward her on the plain,
Who, at her hest, Astolpho's armor tied,
As best he might, and laid on Rabicane;
She next behind her bade the peasant guide
(One courser loaded and one loose) the twain
Two were the steeds: for she had that before,
On which his horse from Pinabel she bore.

To Vallombrosa to direct her way
She thought, in hopes to find Rogero there:
But, fearing evermore to go astray,
Knew not how thither she might best repair.
The churl had of the country small assay,
And, sure to be bewildered, wend the pair;
Yet at a venture hitherward she hies,
Where she believes the place of meeting lies.

She here and there, as she her way pursued,
Turned, but found none to question of the road;
She saw at mid-day, issuing from the wood,
A fort, nor far removed was the abode,
Which on the summit of a mountain stood,
And to the lady like Mount Alban showed;
And was Mount Alban sure; in which repair
One of her brothers and her mother were.

Some deal she doubted; then to turn her steed,
Resolved upon Mount Alban's castle near;
And, for she thence her way could deftly read,
Her course anew toward the abbey steer.
But Fortune, good or evil, had decreed
The maid, before she of the vale was clear,
Of one of her good brethren should be spied,
Alardo named, ere she had time to hide.

Bradamant enters Montalbano's seat,
Whom Beatrice had mourned and vainly sought
Through spacious France. 'Tis here all welcome sweet,
The kiss and clasp of the hand she holds at nought,
While her a mother and a brother greet,
As the enamored maid compares in thought
These with the loved Rogero's fond embrace,
Which time will never from her mind efface.

Because she could not go, one in her stead
To send to Vallombrosa she devised,
Who thither in the damsel's name should speed;
By whom should young Rogero be apprised
What kept her thence; and prayed, if prayer should need,
That there he for her love would be baptized;
And next, as was concerted, would intend
What might their bridal bring to happy end.

Each damsel and each dame who her obeyed,
She tasked, together with herself, to sew,
With subtle toil; and with fine gold o'erlaid
A piece of silk of white and sable hue:
With this she trapt the horse: then chose a maid,
Old Callitrephia's daughter, from the crew;
Whose mother whilom Bradamant had nursed;
A damsel she in all her secrets versed.

Hippalca was the attendant damsel hight.
"Go," says her lady, and describes the way,
And afterward informs the maid aright
Of all that to Rogero she should say;
And why she at the abbey failed the knight,
Who must not to bad faith ascribe her stay,
But this to Fortune charge, that so decides,
Who, more than we ourselves, our conduct guides.

At noon of day, descending from a mount,
She in a straight and ill declivity,
Led by a dwarf, encountered Rodomont,
Who was afoot, and harnessed cap-à-pie.
The Moor toward her raised his haughty front,
And straight blasphemed the eternal Hierarchy
That horse, so richly trapped and passing fair,
He had not found in a knight-errant's care.

On the first courser he should find, the knight
Had sworn a solemn oath his hands to lay:
This was the first, nor he on steed could light
Fairer or fitter; yet to take away
The charger from a maid were foul despite.
Doubtful he stands, but covets sore the prey;
Eyes and surveys him, and says often, "Why
Is not as well the courser's master by?"

"Ah! would he were!" to him the maid replied,
"For haply he would make thee change thy thought.
A better knight than thee the horse doth ride,
And vainly would his match on earth be sought."
"Who tramples thus on other's fame?" he cried;
And she "Rogero" said, as she was taught.
Then Rodomont, "The steed I make my own;
Since him a champion rides of such renown.

"If he, as you relate, be of such force,
That he surpasses all beside in might,
I needs must pay the hire as well as horse,
And be this at the pleasure of the knight!
That I am Rodomont, to him discourse;
And, if indeed with me he lists to fight,
Me shall he find; in that I shine confest,
By my own light, in motion or at rest.

"I leave such vestige wheresoe'er I tread,
The volleyed thunder leaves not worse below."
He had thrown back, over Frontino's head,
The courser's gilded reins, in saying so,
Backed him, and left Hippalca sore bested;
Who, bathed in tears and goaded by her woe,
Cries shame on him, and threats the King with ill.
Rodomont hearkens not, and climbs the hill.

Dead lay Sir Pinabel, and bathed in gore;
From whom such streams of blood profusely flow
As were a cause for wonderment had more
Swords than a hundred joined to lay him low.
A print of recent footsteps to explore
The cavalier of Scotland was not slow;
Who took the adventure, in the hope to read
Who was the doer of the murderous deed.

The hag to wait was ordered by the peer,
Who would return to her in little space.
She to the body of the Count drew near,
And with fixt eye examined every place;
Who willed not aught that in her sight was dear
The body of the dead should vainly grace;
As one who, soiled with every other vice,
Surpassed all womankind in avarice.

If she in any manner could have thought,
Or hoped to have concealed the intended theft,
The bleeding warrior's surcoat, richly wrought,
She would, together with his arms, have reft;
But at what might be safely hidden, caught,
And, grieved at heart, forewent the glorious weft.
Him of a beauteous girdle she undrest,
And this secured between a double vest.

Zerbino after some short space came back,
Who vainly Bradamant had thence pursued
Through the green holt; because the beaten track
Was lost in many others in the wood;
And he (for daylight now began to lack)
Feared night should catch him 'mid those mountains rude,
And with the impious woman thence, in quest
Of inn, from the disastrous valley prest.

A spacious town, which Altaripa hight,
Journeying, the twain at two miles' distance spy:
There stopped the pair, and halted for the night,
Which, at full soar, even now went up the sky:
Nor long had rested there ere, left and right,
They from the people heard a mournful cry;
And saw fast tears from every eyelid fall,
As if some cause of sorrow touched them all.

Zerbino asked the occasion, and 'twas said,
Tidings had been to Count Anselmo brought,
That Pinabel, his son, was lying dead
In a straight way between two mountains wrought.
Zerbino feigned surprise, and hung his head,
In fear lest he the assassin should be thought;
But well divined this was the wight he found
Upon his journey, lifeless on the ground.

While solemn preparation was now made
For the grand obsequies, with reverence due,
According to old use and honors paid,
In former age, corrupted by each new;
A proclamation of their lord allayed
Quickly the noise of the lamenting crew;
Promising any one a mighty gain
That should denounce by whom his son was slain.

From voice to voice, from one to other ear,
The loud proclaim they through the town declare.
Till this the wicked woman chanced to hear,
Who passed in rage the tiger or the bear;
And hence the ruin of the Scottish peer,
Either in hatred, would the crone prepare,
Or were it she alone might boast to be,
In human form, without humanity;

Or were it but to gain the promised prize;
She to seek out the grieving County flew,
And, prefacing her tale in likely wise,
Said that Zerbino did the deed; and drew
A girdle forth, to witness to her lies;
Which straight the miserable father knew;
And on the woman's tale and token built
A clear assurance of Zerbino's guilt.

That night in prison, loaded with a pair
Of heavy fetters, is Zerbino chained.
For before yet the skies illumined are,
The wrongful execution is ordained;
And in the place will he be quartered, where
The deed was done for which he is arraigned,
No other inquest is on this received;
It is enough that so their lord believed.

When, the next morn, Aurora stains with dye
Red, white, and yellow, the clear horizon,
The people rise, to punish ("Death!" their cry)
Zerbino for the crime he has not done:
They without order him accompany,
A lawless multitude, some ride, some run.
I' the midst the Scottish Prince, with drooping head,
Is, bound upon a little hackney, led.

But He who with the innocent oft sides,
Nor those abandons who make Him their stay,
For Prince Zerbino such defense provides,
There is no fear that he will die to-day;
God thitherward renowned Orlando guides;
Whose coming for his safety paves the way:
Orlando sees beneath him on a plain
The youth to death conducted by the train.

With him was wending she that in a cell,
Prisoned, Orlando found; that royal maid,
Child of Galicia's King, fair Isabel,
Whom chance into the ruffians' power conveyed,
What time her ship she quitted, by the swell
Of the wild sea and tempest overlaid:
The damsel, who still nearer her heart-core
Than her own vital being, Zerbino wore.

She had beneath Orlando's convoy strayed,
Since rescued from the cave. When on the plain
The damsel saw the motley troop arrayed,
She asked Orlando what might be the train.
"I know not," said the Count; and left the maid
Upon the height, and hurried toward the plain.
He marked Zerbino, and at the first sight
A baron of high worth esteemed the knight,

And asked him, why and wherefore him they led
Thus captive, to Zerbino drawing near
At this the doleful Prince upraised his head,
And, having better heard the cavalier,
Rehearsed the truth; and this so well he said,
That he deserved the succor of the peer.
Well Sir Orlando him, by his reply,
Deemed innocent, and wrongly doomed to die.

Orlando to the rabble cried, "Untie
The cavalier, unless you would be slain."
"Who deals such mighty blows?" one made reply,
That would be thought the truest of the train;
"Were he of fire who makes such bold defy,
We wax or straw, too haughty were the strain,"
And charged with that the paladin of France.
Orlando at the losel couched his lance.

The shining armor that the chief had rent
From young Zerbino but the night before,
And clothed himself withal, poor succor lent
Against Orlando in that combat sore.
Against the churl's right cheek the weapon went:
It failed indeed his tempered helm to bore,
But such a shock he suffered in the strife,
As broke his neck, and stretched him void of life.

All at one course, of other of the band,
With lance unmoved, he pierced the bosom through;
Left it; on Durindana laid his hand,
And broke into the thickest of the crew.
One head in twain he severed with the brand,
While, from the shoulders lopt, another flew;
Of many pierced the throat; and in a breath
More than a hundred broke and put to death.

Then Roland, after he had loosed the knight,
Helped him to don his shining arms again;
Stript from those sergeants' captain, who had dight
Himself with the good harness, to his pain;
The Prince on Isabella turned his sight,
Who had halted on the hill above the plain;
And, after she perceived the strife was o'er,
Nearer the field of fight her beauties bore.

When young Zerbino at his side surveyed
The lady, who by him was held so dear,
The beauteous lady, whom false tongue had said
Was drowned, so often wept with many a tear,
As if ice at his heart-core had been laid,
Waxed cold, and some deal shook the cavalier;
But the chill quickly passed, and he, instead,
Was flushed with amorous fire, from foot to head.

From quickly clipping her in his embrace,
Him reverence for Anglantes' sovereign stayed;
Because he thought, and held for certain case,
That Roland was a lover of the maid;
So past from pain to pain; and little space
Endure the joy which he at first assayed.
And worse he bore she should another's be,
Than hearing that the maid was drowned at sea.

And worse he grieved, that she was with a knight
To whom he owed so much; because to wrest
The lady from his hands was neither right
Nor yet perhaps would prove an easy quest.
He, without quarrel, had no other wight
Suffered to part, of such a prize possessed;
But would endure Orlando (such his debt)
A foot upon his prostrate neck should set.

The three in silence journey to a font,
Where they alight, and halt beside the well;
His helmet here undid the weary Count,
And made the Prince too quit the iron shell.
The youth unhelmed, she sees her lover's front,
And pale with sudden joy grows Isabel;
Then, changing, brightened like a humid flower,
When the warm sun succeeds to drenching shower.

And without more delay or scruple, prest
To cast her arms about her lover dear;
And not a word could draw forth from her breast,
But bathed his neck and face with briny tear.
Orlando, who remarked the love expressed,
Needing no more to make the matter clear,
Could not but, by these certain tokens, see
This could no other but Zerbino be.

When speech returned, ere yet the maiden well
Had dried her cheeks from the descending tear,
She only of the courtesy could tell
Late shown her by Anglantes' cavalier.
The Prince, who in one scale weighed Isabel
Together with his life, esteemed as dear,
Fell at Orlando's feet and him adored,
As to two lives at once by him restored.

Proffers and thanks had followed, with a round
Of courtesies between the warlike pair,
Had they not heard the covered paths resound,
Which overgrown with gloomy foliage were.
Upon their heads the helmets late unbound,
They quickly place, and to their steeds repair;
And lo! a knight and maid arrive, ere well
The cavaliers are seated in the sell.

This was the Tartar Mandricardo, who
In haste behind the paladin had sped,
To venge Alzirdo and Manilard, the two
Whom good Orlando's valor had laid dead;
Though afterward less eager to pursue,
Since he with him fair Doralice had led;
Whom from a hundred men, in plate and chain,
He, with a simple staff of oak, had ta'en.

Yet knew not that it was Anglantes' peer
This while, of whom he had pursued the beat;
Though that he was a puissant cavalier
By certain signals was he taught to weet.
More than Zerbino him he eyed, and, near,
Perused the paladin from head to feet;
Then finding all the tokens coincide,
"Thou art the man I seek," the paynim cried.

"'Tis now ten days," to him the Tartar said,
"That thee I still have followed; so the fame
Had stung me, and in me such longing bred,
Which of thee to our camp of Paris came;
When, amid thousands by thy hand laid dead,
Scarce one alive fled thither, to proclaim
The mighty havoc made by thy good hand,
'Mid Tremisena's and Noritia's band.

"I was not, as I knew, in following slow
Both to behold thee, and to prove thy might;
And by the surcoat o'er thine arms I know,
Instructed of thy vest, thou art the knight:
And if such cognizance thou didst not show,
And, 'mid a hundred, wert concealed from sight,
For what thou art thou plainly wouldst appear,
Thy worth conspicuous in thy haughty cheer."

"No one can say," to him Orlando cried,
"But that a valiant cavalier thou art;
For such a brave desire can ill reside,
'Tis my assurance, in a humble heart.
Since thou wouldst see me, would that thou inside
Couldst as without, behold me! I apart
Will lay my helm, that in all points thy will
And purpose of thy quest I may fulfil.

"But when thou well hast scanned me with thine eye,
To that thine other wish as well attend;
It still remains for thee to satisfy
The want that leads thee after me to wend;
That thou mayest mark if, in my valor, I
Agree with that bold cheer thou so commend."
"And now," exclaimed the Tartar, "for the rest!
"For my first want is thoroughly redrest."

Orlando, all this while, from head to feet,
Searches the paynim with inquiring eyes;
Both sides, and next the pommel of his seat
Surveys, yet neither mace nor tuck espies;
And asks, how he the combat will repeat
If his good lance at the encounter flies.
"Take thou no care for that," replied the peer;
"Thus into many have I stricken fear.

"I have an oath in heaven to gird no blade,
Till Durindana from the Count be won,
Pursuing whom, I through each road here strayed,
With him to reckon for more posts than one.
If thou wilt please to hear, my oath I made
When on my head I placed this morion:
Which casque, with all the other arms I bear,
A thousand years ago great Hector's were.

"To these good arms nought lacks beside the sword;
How it was stolen, to you I cannot say.
This now, it seems, is borne by Brava's lord,
And hence is he so daring in affray.
Yet well I trust, if I the warrior board,
To make him render his ill-gotten prey.
Yet more; I seek the champion with desire
To avenge the famous Agrican, my sire.

"Him this Orlando slew by treachery,
"I wot, nor could have slain in other wise."
The Count could bear no more, and, "Tis a lie!"
Exclaims, "and whosoever says so, lies.
Him fairly did I slay; Orlando, I.
But what thou seekest Fortune here supplies;
And this the falchion is, which thou hast sought,
Which shall be thine if by thy valor bought.

"Although mine is the falchion, rightfully,
Let us for it in courtesy contend;
Nor will I, in this battle, that it be
More mine than thine, but to a tree suspend.
Bear off the weapon freely hence, if me
Thou kill or conquer." As he made an end,
He Durindana from his belt unslung.
And in mid-field upon a sapling hung.

Already distant half the range of bow
Is from his opposite each puissant knight,
And pricks against the other, nothing slow
To slack the reins or ply the rowels bright.
Already dealt is either mighty blow,
Where the helm yields a passage to the sight.
As if of ice, the shattered lances fly,
Broke in a thousand pieces, to the sky.

The truncheons that the valiant champions bear,
Fail in the combat, and few blows resist;
Both rage with mightier fury, here and there,
Left without other weapon than the fist;
With this the desperate foes engage, and, where
The hand can grapple, plate and mail untwist.
Let none desire, to guard himself from wrongs,
A heavier hammer or more holding tongs.

How can the Saracen conclude the fray
With honor, which he haughtily had sought?
'Twere folly to waste time in an assay
Where to himself more harm the smiter wrought
Than to the smitten; in conclusion, they
Closed, and the paynim king Orlando caught,
And strained against his bosom; what Jove's son
Did by Antæus, thinking to have done.

Him griped athwart, he, in impetuous mood,
Would now push from him, now would closely strain;
And waxed so wroth that, in his heat of blood,
The Tartar little thought about his rein.
Firm in his stirrups self-collected stood
Roland, and watched his vantage to obtain;
He to the other courser's forehead slipt
His wary hand, and thence the bridle stript.

The Saracen essays with all his might
To choke, and from the sell his foeman tear;
With either knee Orlando grasps it tight,
Nor can the Tartar move him, here or there.
But with the straining of the paynim knight,
The girts which hold his saddle broken are.
Scarce conscious of his fall, Orlando lies,
With feet i' the stirrups, tightening yet his thighs.

As falls a sack of armor, with such sound
Tumbled Orlando, when he pressed the plain.
King Mandricardo's courser, when he found
His head delivered from the guiding rein,
Made off with him, unheeding what the ground,
Stumbling through woodland, or by pathway plain,
Hither and thither, blinded by his fear;
And bore with him the Tartar cavalier.

The beauteous Doralice, who sees her guide
So quit the field, dismayed at his retreat,
And wonted in his succor to confide,
Her hackney drives behind his courser fleet:
The paynim rates the charger, in his pride,
And smites him oftentimes with hands and feet;
Threatening, as if he understood his lore;
And where he'd stop the courser, chafes him more.

Not looking to his feet, by high or low,
The beast of craven kind, with headlong force
Three miles in rings had gone, and more would go,
But that into a fosse, which stopped their course,
Not lined with featherbed or quilt below,
Tumble, reversed, the rider and his horse.
On the hard ground was Mandircardo thrown,
Yet neither spoiled himself, nor broke a bone.

Here stopped the horse; but him he could not guide,
Left without bit his motions to restrain.
Brimful of rage and choler, at his side,
The Tartar held him, grappled by the mane.
"Put upon him," to Mandricardo cried
His lady, Doralice, "my hackney's rein,
Since for the bridle I have little use;
For gentle is my palfry, reined or loose."

The paynim deems it were discourtesy
To accept the proffer by the damsel made,
But his through other means a rein will be;
Since Fortune, who his wishes well appaid,
Made thitherward the false Gabrina flee,
After she young Zerbino had betrayed;
Who like a she-wolf fled, which, as she hies,
At distance hears the hounds and hunters' cries.

She had upon her back the gallant gear,
And the same youthful ornaments and vest,
Stripped from the ill-taught damsel for her jeer,
That in her spoils the beldam might be drest,
And rode the horse that damsel backed whilere;
Which was among the choicest and the best.
Ere yet aware of her, the ancient dame
On Doralice and Mandricardo came.

Stordilane's daughter and the Tartar king
Laugh at the vest of youthful show and shape
Upon that ancient woman, figuring
Like monkey, rather say, like grandam ape.
From her the Saracen designs to wring
The rein, and does the deed; upon the rape
Of the crone's bridle, he, with angry cry,
Threatens and scares her horse, and makes him fly.

He flies and hurries through the forest gray
That ancient woman, almost dead with fear,
By hill and dale, by straight and crooked way,
By fosse and cliff, at hazard, there and here.
But it imports me not so much to say
Of her, that I should leave Anglantes' peer,
Who, from annoyance of a foe released,
The broken saddle at his ease re-pieced.

The course in pathless woods, which, without rein,
The Tartar's charger had pursued astray,
Made Roland for two days, with fruitless pain,
Follow him, without tidings of his way.
Orlando reached a rill of crystal vein,
On either bank of which a meadow lay;
Which, stained with native hues and rich, he sees,
And dotted o'er with fair and many trees.

The mid-day fervor made the shelter sweet
To hardy herd as well as naked swain;
So that Orlando, well beneath the heat
Some deal might wince, oppressed with plate and chain.
He entered, for repose, the cool retreat,
And found it the abode of grief and pain;
And place of sojourn more accursed and fell,
On that unhappy day, than tongue can tell.

Turning him round, he there, on many a tree,
Beheld engraved, upon the woody shore,
What as the writing of his deity
He knew, as soon as he had marked the lore.
This was a place of those described by me,
Whither ofttimes, attended by Medore,
From the near shepherd's cot had wont to stray
The beauteous lady, sovereign of Catay.

In a hundred knots, amid those green abodes,
In a hundred parts, their cyphered names are dight;
Whose many letters are so many goads,
Which love has in his bleeding heart-core pight.
He would discredit in a thousand modes
That which he credits in his own despite;
And would perforce persuade himself, that rhind
Other Angelica than his had signed.

Here from his horse the sorrowing County lit,
And at the entrance of the grot surveyed
A cloud of words, which seemed but newly writ,
And which the young Medoro's hand had made.
On the great pleasure he had known in it,
This sentence he in verses had arrayed;
Which in his tongue, I deem, might make pretence
To polished phrase; and such in ours the sense.

"Gay plants, green herbage, rill of limpid vein,
And, grateful with cool shade, thou gloomy cave,
Where oft, by many wooed with fruitless pain,
Beauteous Angelica, the child of grave
King Galaphron, within my arms has lain;
For the convenient harborage you gave,
I, poor Medoro, can but in my lays,
As recompense, forever sing your praise.

"And any loving lord devoutly pray,
Damsel and cavalier, and every one,
Whom choice or fortune hither shall convey,
Stranger or native,—to this crystal run,
Shade, caverned rock, and grass and plants, to say
Benignant be to you the fostering sun
And moon, and may the choir of nymphs provide,
That never swain his flock may hither guide!"

Orlando lost all feeling; so a prey
Wholly was he to that o'ermastering woe.
This is a pang, believe the experienced say
Of him who speaks, which does all griefs outgo.
His pride had from his forehead passed away,
His chin had fallen upon his breast below;
Nor found he, so grief barred each natural vent,
Moisture for tears, or utterance for lament.

Still with vain hope he sought himself to cheat,
And manned some deal his spirits and awoke;
Then pressed the faithful Brigliadoro's seat,
As on the sun's retreat his sister broke.
Nor far the warrior had pursued his beat,
Ere eddying from a roof he saw the smoke;
Heard noise of dog and kine, a farm espied,
And thitherward in quest of lodging hied.

Languid, he lit, and left his Brigliador
To a discreet attendant, one undrest
His limbs, one doffed the golden spurs he wore,
And one bore off, to clean, his iron vest.
This was the homestead where the young Medore
Lay wounded, and was here supremely blest.
Orlando here, with other food unfed,
Having supped full of sorrow, sought his bed.

Little availed the Count his self-deceit;
For there was one who spake of it unsought;
The shepherd-swain, who to allay the heat,
With which he saw his guest so troubled, thought
The tale which he was wonted to repeat
—Of the two lovers, to each listener taught,
A history which many loved to hear—
He now, without reserve, 'gan tell the peer.

Now to the Count such dealy hatred breed
That bed, that house, that swain, he will not stay
Till the morn break, or till the dawn succeed,
Whose twilight goes before approaching day.
In haste, Orlando takes his arms and steed,
And to the deepest greenwood wends his way.
And, when assured that he is there alone,
Gives utterance to his grief in shriek and groan.

Never from tears, never from sorrowing,
He paused: nor found he peace by night or day:
He fled from town, in forest harboring,
And in the open air on hard earth lay.
He marveled at himself, how such a spring
Of water from his eyes could stream away,
And breath was for so many sobs supplied;
And thus ofttimes, amid his mourning, cried:

"I am not—am not what I seem to sight:
What Roland was is dead and under ground,
Slain by that most ungrateful lady's spite,
Whose faithlessness inflicted such a wound.
Divided from the flesh, I am his sprite,
Which in this hell, tormented, walks its round,
To be, but in its shadow left above,
A warning to all such as trust in love."

All night about the forest roved the Count,
And, at the break of daily light, was brought
By his unhappy fortune to the fount,
Where his inscription young Medora wrought.
To see his wrongs inscribed upon that mount,
Inflamed his fury so, in him was nought
But turned to hatred, frenzy, rage, and spite;
Nor paused he more, but bared his falchion bright;

Cleft through the writing; and the solid block,
Into the sky, in tiny fragments sped.
Wo worth each sapling and that caverned rock,
Where Medore and Angelica were read!
So scathed that they to shepherd or to flock
Thenceforth shall never furnish shade or bed.
And that sweet fountain, late so clear and pure,
From such tempestuous wrath was ill secure.

For he turf, stone, and trunk, and shoot, and lop
Cast without cease into the beauteous source.
Till, turbid from the bottom to the top,
Never again was clear the troubled course.
At length, for lack of breath, compelled to stop,
(When he is bathed in sweat, and wasted force
Serves not his fury more) he falls, and lies
Upon the mead, and, gazing upward, sighs.

Wearied and woe-begone, he fell to ground,
And turned his eyes toward heaven; nor spake he aught,
Nor ate, nor slept, till in his daily round
The golden sun had broken thrice, and sought
His rest anew; nor ever ceased his wound
To rankle, till it marred his sober thought,
At length, impelled by frenzy, the fourth day
He from his limbs tore plate and mail away.

So fierce with rage, so fierce his fury grew,
That all obscured remained the warrior's sprite;
Nor, for forgetfulness, his sword he drew,
Or wondrous deeds, I trow, had wrought the knight;
But neither this, nor bill, nor axe to hew,
Was needed by Orlando's peerless might.
He of his prowess gave high proofs and full,
Who a tall pine uprooted at a pull.

He many others, with as little let
As fennel, walwort-stem, or dill, uptore;
And ilex knotted oak, and fir upset,
And beech, and mountain ash, and elm-tree hoar.
He did what fowler ere he spreads his net,
Does, to prepare the champaign for his lore,
By stubble, rush, and nettle-stalk; and broke
Like these old sturdy trees and stems of oak.

CANTO XVIII

Viewing the madman's wondrous feats more near,
The frighted band of rustics turned and fled;
But they, in their disorder, knew not where,
As happens oftentimes in sudden dread.
The madman in a thought is in their rear,
Seizes a shepherd, and plucks off his head!
And this as easily as one might take
Apple from tree, or blossom from the brake.

He by one leg the heavy trunk in air
Upheaved, and made a mace the rest to bray.
Astounded, upon earth he stretched one pair,
Who haply may awake at the last day.
The rest, who well advised and nimble are,
At once desert the field and scour away:
Nor had the madman their pursuit deferred,
Had he not turned already on their herd.

By such examples warned, the rustic crew
Abandoned in the fields pick, scythe, and plough,
And to the roof of house and temple flew,
For ill secure was elm or willow's bough.
From hence the maniac's horrid rage they view;
Who dealing kick, and bite, and scratch, and blow,
Horses and oxen slew, his helpless prey;
And well the courser ran that 'scaped that day.

Already might'st thou hear how loudly ring
The hubbub and the din from neighboring farms,
Outcry and horn, and rustic trumpeting;
And faster sound of bells; with various arms,
By thousands, with spontoon, bow, spit and sling,
Lo! from the hills the rough militia swarms.
As many peasants from the vale below,
To make rude war upon the madman go.

Twice he ten peasants slaughtered in his mood
Who, charging him in disarray, were slain;
And this experiment right clearly showed
To stand aloof was safest for the train.
Was none who from his body could draw blood;
For iron smote the impassive skin in vain.
So had the heaven's King preserved the Count from scathe,
To make him guardian of his holy faith.

He would have been in peril on that day,
Had be been made of vulnerable mould;
And might have learned what 'twas to cast away
His sword, and, weaponless, so play the bold.
The rustic troop retreated from the fray,
Seeing no stroke upon the madman told.
Since him no other enemy attends,
Orlando to a neighboring township wends.

Since every one had left the place for dread,
No wight he found within it, small or great.
But here was homely food in plenty spread,
Victual, well sorting with the pastoral state.
Here, acorns undistinguishing from bread,
By tedious fast and fury driven to sate
His hunger, he employed his hand and jaw
On what he first discovered, cooked or raw.

Thence, repossessed with the desire to rove,
He, through the land, did man and beast pursue;
And scouring, in his frenzy, wood and grove,
Took sometimes goat or doe of dappled hue
Often with bear and with wild boar he strove,
And with his naked hand the brutes o'erthrew;
And gorging oftentimes the savage fare,
Swallowed the prey with all its skin and hair.

When Roland had departed on his quest,
Zerbino paused some deal; then, in his rear,
Slowly his steed by the same path addrest,
Which had been taken by Anglantes' peer;
Nor two miles on his way, I think, had prest,
When he beheld a captive cavalier,
Upon a sorry little hackney tied,
And by armed horseman watched on either side.

Zerbino speedily the prisoner knew,
And Isabel, as soon; when nigh surveyed.
This was Sir Odoric, the Biscayan, who
Like wolf, the guardian of a lamb was made:
To whom, of all his friends esteemed most true,
Zerbino Isabella had conveyed;
Hoping, one hitherto by him found just,
Would now, as ever, have approved his trust.

The two that had Sir Odoric in their ward,
The royal damsel Isabella knew;
And deemed he was her lover and her lord,
That pricked beside the lady, fair of hue.
More; that the bearings on his shield record
The honors of the stem from which he grew;
And found, as better they observed his cheer,
They had judged rightly of the cavalier.

Lighting with open arms and hurried pace,
They make toward Zerbino eagerly,
And, kneeling, with bare head, the Prince embrace,
Where lord is clipt by one of less degree.
Zerbino, looking either in the face,
Knows one Corebo of Biscay to be,
And Sir Almonio, his co-mate; the pair
Charged, under Odoric, with the galley's care.

Almonio cried, "Since God is pleased in the end,
Gramercy! Isabel should be with you;
My lord, I very clearly comprehend
I should deliver tidings, nothing new,
If I should now inform you why I wend
With this offender, whom with me you view.
Since she, who at his hands has suffered worst,
The story of his crimes will have rehearsed.

"I seaward from the city, with a store
Of nags, collected in a hurry, fare;
Aye watchful, if the trace I can explore
Of those left far behind me; I repair
Thitherward; I arrive upon the shore,
The place where they were left; look everywhere;
Nor sign of them perceive upon that strand,
Except some steps, new-printed on the sand.

The steps I traced into the forest drear;
Nor far within the greenwood had I wound,
When, guided by a noise that smote my ear,
I saw my comrade bleeding on the ground.
Of Isabel I asked the cavalier,
Of Odoric, and what hand had dealt his wound:
And thence departed, when the thing I knew,
Seeking the wretch these precipices through.

"Wide circling still I go, and through that day
I find no other sign of him that fled;
At length return to where Corebo lay,
Who had the ground about him dyed so red
That he, had I made little more delay,
A grave would have required, and, more than bed
And succor of the leech, to make him sound,
Craved priest and friar to lay him in the ground.

"I had him to the neighboring city brought,
And boarded with a friendly host; and there
Corebo's cure in little time was wrought,
Beneath an old chirurgeon's skilful care.
This finished, having arms and horses bought,
We thence together to the court repair
Of King Alphonso of Biscay; where I
Find out the traitor, and to fight defy.

"The monarch's justice, who fair field and free
Allowed us for the duel, and my right,
And Destiny to boot (for Destiny
Oftener makes conquest where she listeth, light)
So backed my arms, that felon was by me
Worsted, and made a prisoner in the fight.
Alphonso, having heard his guilt confessed,
Bade me dispose of him as liked me best.

"Him would I neither loose, nor yet have slain,
But, as thou seest, in bonds to thee convey;
That whether he should be condemned to pain,
Or death, it should be thine his doom to say.
I, hearing thou wert with King Charlemagne,
Thither, in hope to find thee, took my way.
I thank my God, that thee upon this ground,
Where I least hoped to meet thee, I have found.

"As well I render thanks, that Isabel
I see restored to thee, I know not how,
Of whom, by reason of that traitor fell,
I deemed thou never more should'st tidings know."
In silence Prince Zerbino hears him tell
His story, gazing upon Odoric's brow
In pity, more than hate, as he perpends
How foully such a goodly friendship ends.

After Almonio had his tale suspended,
Astounded for a while the Prince stood by;
Wondering, that he who least should have offended,
Had him requited with such treachery;
But, his long fit of admiration ended,
Waking from his amazement with a sigh,
Questioned the prisoner in the horsemen's hold,
If that was true the cavalier had told.

The faithless man alighted, and down fell
Upon his bended knees, and answered: "Sir,
All people that on middle earth do dwell,
Through weakness of their nature, sin and err.
One thing alone distinguishes the well
And evil doer—this, at every stir
Of least desire, submits, without a blow;
That arms, but yields as well to stronger foe.

"Had I been charged some castle to maintain,
And, without contest, on the first assault,
Hoisted the banners of the hostile train,
—For cowardice, or treason, fouler fault—
Upon my eyes, a well deserved pain,
Thou might'st have justly closed the darksome vault;
But, yielding to superior force, I read
I should not merit blame, but praise and meed.

"The stronger is the enemy, the more
Easily is the vanquished side excused:
I could but faith maintain as, girded sore,
The leaguered fort to keep her faith is used;
Even so, with all the sense, with all the lore
By sovereign wisdom into me infused,
This I essayed to keep; but in the end,
To o'ermastering assault was forced to bend."

Whether or no to avenge such infamy,
  Youthful Zerbino doubted; the review
Of faithless Odorico's treachery
  Moved him to death the felon to pursue;
The recollection of the amity ..
  So long maintained between them, with the dew
Of pity cooled the fury in his mind,
And him to mercy toward the wretch inclined.

While Scotland's Prince is doubting in such wise
  To keep him captive, or to loose his chain;
Or to remove him from before his eyes,
  By dooming him to die, or live in pain;
Loud neighing, thitherward the palfrey hies
  From which the Tartar king had stripped the rein;
And the old harridan, who had before
Nigh caused Zerbino's death, among them bore.

The horse, which had the others of that band
  Heard at a distance, thither her conveyed.
Sore weeping came the old woman, and demand
  For succor in her trouble vainly made.
Zerbino, when he saw her, raised his hand
  To heaven, that had to him such grace displayed,
Giving him to decide that couple's fate;
The only two that had deserved his hate.

The wicked hag is kept, so bids the peer,
  Until he is determined what to do;
He cut off her nose and either ear
  Now, thought, and her as an example shew.
Next, 'twere far better, deemed the cavalier,
  If to the vultures he her carcass threw,
He divers punishments awhile revolved,
And thus the warrior finally resolved.

He to his comrades turned him round, and said:
  "To let the traitor live I am content,
Who, if full grace he has not merited,
  Yet merits not to be so foully shent.
I, as I find his fault of love was bred,
  To give him life and liberty consent;
And easily we all excuses own,
When on commanding Love the blame is thrown."

Then gazing upon Odoric, 'gan say;
  "This is the penance I enjoin to thee;
That thou a year shalt with the beldam stay
  Nor ever leave this while her company;
But, roving or at rest, by night or day,
  Shalt never for an hour without her be;
And her shall even unto death maintain
Against whoever threatens her with pain.

"I will, if so this woman shall command,
With whosoe'er he be, thou battle do,
I will this while that thou all France's land,
From city shalt to city, wander through."
So says he; for as Odoric at his hand
Well merits death, for his foul trespass due,
This is a pitfall for his feet to shape,
Which it will be rare fortune if he 'scape.

So many women, many men betrayed,
And wronged by her, have been so many more,
Not without strife by knight shall he be stayed,
Who has beneath his care the beldam hoar.
So, for their crimes, shall both alike be paid;
She for her evil actions done before,
And he who wrongfully shall her defend;
Nor far can go before he finds an end.

To keep the pact Zerbino makes him swear
A mighty oath, under this penalty,
That should he break his faith, and anywhere
Into his presence led by fortune be,
Without more mercy, without time for prayer,
A cruel death shall wait him, as his fee.
Next by his comrades (so their lord commands)
Sir Odoric is unpinioned from his bands.

One author vouches (I declare not who)
That hence they had not one day's journey wended,
When Odoric, to all pact, all faith, untrue,
For riddance of the pest to him commended,
About Gabrina's neck a halter threw,
And left her to a neighboring elm suspended;
And in a year (the place he does not name)
Almonio by the traitor did the same.

Zerbino, whom the paladin pursues,
And loath would be to lose the cavalier,
To his Scottish squadron of himself sends news,
Which for its captain well might stand in fear;
Almonio sends, and many matters shews,
Too long at full to be recited here;
Almonio sends, Corebo next; nor stayed
Other with him, besides the royal maid.

So mighty is the love Zerbino bore,
Nor less than his the love that Isabel
Nursed for the valorous paladin, so sore
He longed to know if that bold infidel
The Count had found, who in the duel tore
Him from his horse, together with the sell,
That he to Charles's camp, till the third day
Be ended, will not measure back his way.

This was the term for which Orlando said
He should wait him, who yet no falchion wears
Nor is there place the Count has visited,
But thither in his search Zerbino fares.
Last to those trees, upon whose bark was read
The ungrateful lady's writing, he repairs,
Little beside the road; and there finds all
In strange disorder, rock and waterfall.

Far off, he saw that something shining lay,
And spied Orlando's corslet on the ground;
And next his helm; but not that head-piece gay
Which whilom African Almontes crowned.
He in the thicket heard a courser neigh,
And, lifting up his visage at the sound,
Saw Brigliadoro the green herbage browse,
With rein yet hanging at his saddle-bows.

For Durindane, he sought the greenwood, round,
Which separate from the scabbard met his view;
And next the surcoat, but in tatters, found:
That, in a hundred rags, the champion strew.
Zerbino and Isabel, in grief profound,
Stood looking on, nor what to think they knew:
They of all matters else might think, besides
The fury which the wretched Count misguides.

Had but the lovers seen a drop of blood,
They might have well believed Orlando dead.
This while the pair, beside the neighboring flood,
Beheld a shepherd coming, pale with dread.
He just before, as on a rock he stood,
Had seen the wretch's fury; how he shed
His arms about the forest, tore his clothes,
Slew hinds, and caused a thousand other woes.

Questioned by good Zerbino, him the swain
Of all that there had chanced, informed aright.
Zerbino marveled, and believed with pain,
Although the proofs were clear. This as it might,
He from his horse dismounted on the plain,
Full of compassion, in afflicted plight;
And went about, collecting from the ground
The various relics that were scattered round.

Isabel lights as well; and, where they lie
Dispersed, the various arms uniting goes.
Lo! them a damsel joins, who frequent sigh
Heaves from her heart, and doleful visage shows.
If any ask me who the dame, and why
She mourns, and with such sorrow overflows;
I say 'twas Flordelice, who, bound in trace
Of her lost lover's footsteps, sought that place.

Her Brandimart had left disconsolate
Without farewell, i' the court of Charlemagne:
Who there expected him six months or eight;
And lastly, since he came not there again,
From sea to sea had sought her absent mate,
Through Alpine and through Pyrenean chain:
In every place had sought the warrior, save
Within the palace of Atlantes' grave.

Here Prince Zerbino all the arms unites,
And hangs, like a fair trophy, on a pine.
And, to preserve them safe from errant knights,
Natives or foreigners, in one short line
Upon the sapling's verdant surface writes,
Orlando's arms King Charles's paladine.
As he would say, "Let none this harness move,
Who cannot with its lord his prowess prove."

Zerbino having done the pious deed,
Is bowning him to climb his horse; when, lo!
The Tartar King arrives upon the mead.
He, at the trophied pine-tree's gorgeous show,
Beseeches him the cause of this to read;
Who lets him (as rehearsed) the story know.
When, without further pause, the paynim lord
Hastes gladly to the pine, and takes the sword.

"None can (he said) the action reprehend,
Nor first I make the falchion mine to-day;
And to its just possession I pretend
Where'er I find it, be it where it may.
Orlando, this not daring to defend,
Has feigned him mad, and cast the sword away;
But if the champion so excuse his shame,
This is no cause I should forego my claim."

"Take it not thence," to him Zerbino cried,
"Nor think to make it thine without a fight.
If so thou tookest Hector's arms of pride,
By theft thou hadst them, rather than by right."
Without more parley spurred upon each side,
Well matched in soul and valor, either knight.
Already echoed are a thousand blows;
Nor yet well entered are the encountering foes.

In scaping Durindane, a flame in show
(He shifts so quickly) is the Scottish lord.
He leaps about his courser like a doe,
Where'er the road best footing does afford,
And well it is that he should not forego
An inch of vantage; who, if once that sword
Smite him, will join the enamored ghosts that rove
Amid the mazes of the myrtle grove.

As the swift-footed dog that does espy
  Swine severed from his fellows, hunts him hard,
And circles round about; but he lies by
  Till once the restless foe neglect his guard;
So, while the sword descends, or hangs on high,
  Zerbino stands, attentive how to ward,
How to save life and honor from surprise;
And keeps a wary eye, and smites and flies.

In the end he cannot scape one downright blow,
  Which enters, between sword and shield, his breast.
As perfect was the plate and corslet, so
  Thick was the steel wherein his paunch was drest;
But the destructive weapon, falling low,
  Equally opened either iron vest;
And cleft whate'er it swept in its descent,
And to the saddle-bow, through cuirass, went.

And, but that somewhat short the blow descends,
  It would Zerbino like a cane divide;
But him so little in the quick offends,
  This scarce beyond the skin is scarified.
More than a span in length the wound extends,
  Of little depth; of blood a tepid tide
To his feet descending, with a crimson line,
Stains the bright arms that on the warrior shine.

Zerbino, here and there, seeks every way
  By which to wound, nor yet his end obtains;
For, while he smites upon that armor gay,
  Not even a feeble dint the coat retains.
On the other hand, the Tartar in the fray
  Such vantage o'er the Scottish prince obtains,
Him he has wounded in seven parts or eight,
And reft his shield and half his helmet's plate.

He ever wastes his blood; his energies
  Fail, though he feels it not, as 't would appear;
Unharmed, the vigorous heart new force supplies
  To the weak body of the cavalier.
His lady, during this, whose crimson dyes
  Were chased by dread, to Doralice drew near,
And for the love of Heaven, the damsel wooed
To stop that evil and disastrous feud.

Doralice, who as courteous was as fair,
  And ill-assured, withal, how it would end,
Willingly granted Isabella's prayer,
  And straight to truce and peace disposed her friend.
As well Zerbino, by the other's care,
  Was brought his vengeful anger to suspend;
And, wending where she willed, the Scottish lord
Left unachieved the adventure of the sword.

Seeking him morn and evening, but in vain,
Flordelice after Brandimart did fare;
And widely wandered from him, who again
Already had to Paris made repair.
So far the damsel pricked by hill and plain,
She reached the passage of a river, where
She saw the wretched Count; but what befel
The Scottish prince, Zerbino, let me tell.

For weakness can the prince no further hie,
And so beside a fount is forced to stay:
Him to assist the pitying maid would try,
But knows not what to do, nor what to say.
For lack of comfort she beholds him die;
Since every city is too far away,
Where in this need she could resort to leech,
Whose succor she might purchase or beseech.

"So be thou pleased, my heart," Zerbino cried,
To love me still, when I am dead and gone,
As to abandon thee without a guide,
And not to die, distresses me alone.
For did it me in place secure betide
To end my days, this earthly journey done,
I cheerful, and content, and fully blest,
Would die, since I should die upon thy breast.

"But since to abandon thee, to whom a prize
I know not, my sad fate compels, I swear,
My Isabella, by that mouth, those eyes,
By what enchained me first, that lovely hair;
My spirit, troubled and despairing, hies
Into hell's deep and gloomy bottom; where
To think, thou wert abandoned so by me,
Of all its woes the heaviest pain will be."

At this the sorrowing Isabel, declining
Her mournful face, which with her tears o'erflows,
Toward the sufferer, and her mouth conjoining
To her Zerbino's, languid as a rose—
Rose gathered out of season, and which, pining
Fades where it on the shadowy hedgerow grows,
Exclaims, "Without me think not so, my heart,
"On this your last, long journey to depart.

"Of this, my heart, conceive not any fear,
For I will follow thee to heaven or hell;
It fits our souls together quit this sphere,
Together go, for aye together dwell.
No sooner closed thine eyelids shall appear,
Than either me internal grief will quell,
Or, has it not such power, I here protest,
I with this sword to-day will pierce my breast.

"I of our bodies cherish hope not light,
That they shall have a happier fate when dead;
Together to entomb them, may some wight,
Haply by pity moved, be hither led."
She the poor remnants of his vital sprite
Went on collecting, as these words she said;
And while yet aught remains, with mournful lips,
The last faint breath of life devoutly sips.

'Twas here his feeble voice Zerbino manned,
Crying, "My deity, I beg and pray,
By that love witnessed, when thy father's land
Thou quittedst for my sake; and, if I may
In anything command thee, I command,
That, with God's pleasure, thou live out thy day:
Nor ever banish from thy memory,
That, well as man can love, have I loved thee.

"God haply will provide thee with good aid,
To free thee from each churlish deed I fear;
As, when in the dark cavern thou wert stayed,
He sent, to rescue thee, Anglante's peer;
So he (gramercy!) succored thee dismayed
At sea, and from the wicked Biscayneer.
And, if thou must choose death, in place of worse,
Then only choose it as a lesser curse."

I think not these last words of Scotland's knight
Were so exprest that he was understood.
With these he finished, like a feeble light,
Which needs supply of wax or other food.
Who is there that has power to tell aright
The gentle Isabella's doleful mood,
When stiff, her loved Zerbino, with pale face,
And cold as ice, remained in her embrace?

On the ensanguined corse, in sorrow drowned,
The damsel throws herself, in her despair,
And shrieks so loud that wood and plain resound
For many miles about; nor does she spare
Bosom or cheek; but still, with cruel wound,
One and the other smites the afflicted fair;
And wrongs her curling locks of golden grain,
Aye calling on the well-loved youth in vain.

She with such rage, such fury, was possest,
That, in her transport, she Zerbino's glaive
Would easily have turned against her breast,
Ill keeping the command her lover gave;
But that a hermit, from his neighboring rest,
Accustomed oft to seek the fountain-wave,
His flagon at the cooling stream to fill,
Opposed him to the damsel's evil will.

The holy father made the damsel see,
That save in God there was no true content,
And proved all other hope was transitory,
Fleeting, of little worth, and quickly spent;
And urged withal so earnestly his plea,
He changed her ill and obstinate intent;
And made her, for the rest of life, desire
To live devoted to her heavenly sire.

Not that she would her mighty love forbear,
For her dead lord, nor yet his relics slight;
These, did she halt or journey, everywhere
Would Isabel have with her, day and night.
The hermit therefore seconding her care,
Who, for his age, was sound and full of might,
They on his mournful horse Zerbino placed,
And traversed many a day that woodland waste.

So, compassing a mighty round, they fare
Through wildest parts, for many and many a day;
Because, the war extending everywhere,
They seek to hide themselves as best they may.
At length a cavalier arrests the pair,
That with foul scorn and outrage bars their way;
Of whom you more in fitting time shall learn,
But to the Tartar King I now return.

After the fight between the two was done,
Already told by me, the King withdrew
To a cooling shade and river from the sun,
His horse's reins and saddle to undo;
Letting the courser at his pleasure run,
Browsing the tender grass the pasture through;
But he reposed short time ere he descried
An errant knight descend the mountain's side.

Him Doralice, as soon as he his front
Uplifted, knew, and showed him to her knight,
Saying: "Behold! the haughty Rodomont,
Unless the distance has deceived my sight.
To combat with thee, he descends the mount.
Now it behoves thee put forth all thy might.
To lose me, his betrothed, a mighty cross
The monarch deems, and comes to venge his loss."

When the two hostile warriors were so near,
That words could be exchanged between the twain,
Loudly began the monarch of Argier
To threat with head and hand, in haughty strain,
That to repentance he will bring the peer
Who lightly for a pleasure, rash and vain,
Had scrupled not his anger to excite
Who dearly will the offered scorn requite.

When Mandricardo: "He but vainly tries
To fright, who threatens me—by words unscared.
Woman, or child, or him he terrifies,
Witless of warfare; not me, who regard
With more delight than rest, which others prize,
The stirring battle; and who am prepared
My foeman in the lists or field to meet;
Armed or unarmed, on horse or on my feet."

Without once gathering breath, without repose,
The champions one another still assail;
Striving, now here, now there, with deadly blows,
To rive the plate, or penetrate the mail.
Nor this one gains, nor the other ground foregoes;
But, as if girded in by fosse or pale,
Or, as too dearly sold they deem an inch.
Ne'er from their close and narrow circle flinch.

Mid thousand blows, so, with two-handed swing,
On his foe's forehead smote the Tartar knight,
He made him see, revolving in a ring,
Myriads of fiery balls and sparks of light.
The croup, with head reversed, the Sarzan King
Now smote, as if deprived of all his might,
The stirrups lost; and in her sight, so well
Beloved, appeared about to quit the sell.

But as steel arbalest that's loaded sore,
By how much is the engine charged and strained,
By lever or by crane, with so much more
Fury returns, its ancient bent regained,
And, in discharging its destructive store,
Inflicts worse evil than itself sustained;
So rose that African with ready blade,
And straight with double force the stroke repaid.

Rodomont smites, and in the very place
Where he was smit, the Tartar in return;
But cannot wound the Sarzan in the face,
Because his Trojan arms the weapon turn;
Yet so astounds, he leaves him not in case
If it be morn or evening to discern.
Rodomont stopt not, but in fury sped
A second blow, still aiming at his head.

King Mandricardo's courser, which abhorred
The whistling of the steel that round him flew,
Saved, with sore mischief to himself, his lord;
In that he backed the falchion to eschew:
Aimed at his master, not at him, the sword
Smote him across the head, and cleft it through.
No Trojan helm defends the wretched horse,
Like Mandricardo, and he dies perforce.

He falls, and Mandricardo on the plain
No more astound, slides down upon his feet,
And whirls his sword; to see his courser slain
He storms, all over, fired with angry heat.
At him the Sarzan monarch drives amain;
Who stands as firm as rock that billows beat.
And so it happened that the courser good
Fell in the charge, while fast the footman stood.

The African, who feels his horse give way,
The stirrups quits, and lightly from the sell
Is freed, and springs on earth. For the assay
Hence matched anew, stands either infidel,
Worse than before the battle boils, while they
With pride and anger, and with hatred swell,
About to close; but that, with flowing rein,
A messenger arrives to part the twain.

He to fair Doralice approached, and said,
Marsilius, Agramant, and Stordilane,
Within weak works, with scanty troops to aid,
Were closed beleaguered by the Christian train.
And, having told his tale, the damsel prayed,
That this she to the warriors would explain;
And would accord the pair, and to their post
Dispatch, for rescue of the Moorish host.

The lady, with bold heart, 'twixt either foe
Threw herself, and exclaimed; "I you command,
By the large love you bear me, as I know,
That you to better use reserve the brand;
And that you instantly in succor go
Of our host, menaced by the Christian band;
Which now, besieged within its camp, attends
Ruin or speedy succor from its friends."

The messenger rehearsed, when she had done,
Fully the peril of the paynim train;
And said that he bore letters to the son
Of Ulien, from the son of King Troyane.
The message ended, every grudge foregone,
'Twas finally resolved between the twain,
They should conclude a truce, and till the day
The Moorish siege was raised, their strife delay.

CANTO XIX

'Twas now, suspending all their hostile rage,
One and the other paynim cavalier,
The Moorish host from siege to disengage,
For Paris, with the gentle lady, steer;
And with them goes as well that dwarfish page,
Who tracked the footsteps of the Tartar peer,
Till he had brought the warrior front to front,
In presence with the jealous Rodomont.

They at a mead arrived, where, in disport,
Knights were reposing by a stream, one pair
Disarmed, another casqued in martial sort;
And with them was a dame of visage fair.
Of these in other place I shall report,
Not now; for first Rogero is my care,
That good Rogero, who, as I have shown,
Into a well the magic shield had thrown.

He from that well a mile is hardly gone
Ere he a courier sees arrive at speed,
Of those despatched by King Troyano's son
To knights whom he awaited in his need;
From him Rogero hears that so foredone
By Charles are those who hold the paynim creed,
They will, save quickly succored in the strife,
As quickly forfeit liberty and life.

Pursuing thence their ancient road again,
They reached a city, with the westering sun;
Which, in the midst of France, from Charlemagne
Marsilius had in that long warfare won;
Nor them to interrupt or to detain,
At drawbridge or at gate, was any one;
Though in the fosse, and round the palisade,
Stood many men, and piles of arms were laid.

Because the troop about that fortress see
Accompanying him the well-known dame,
They to Rogero leave the passage free,
Nor even question him from whence he came.
Reaching the square, of evil company
He finds it full, and bright with ruddy flame;
And, in the midst, is manifest to view
The youth condemned, with face of pallid hue.

As on the stripling's face he turns his eyes,
Which hangs declined and wet with frequent tear,
Rogero thinks he Bradamant descries;
So much the youth resembles her in cheer:
More sure the more intently he espies
Her face and shape; when thus the cavalier:
"Or this is Bradamant, or I no more
Am the Rogero which I was before.

"She hath adventured with too daring will,
In rescue of the youth condemned to die;
And, for the enterprise has ended ill,
Hath here been taken, as I see. Ah! why
Was she so hot her purpose to fulfil,
That she must hither unattended hie?
But I thank Heaven that hither have I made;
Since I am yet in time to lend her aid."

He drew his falchion without more delay,
(His lance was broken at the other town),
And, through the unarmed people making way,
Wounding flank, paunch, and bosom, bore them down.
He whirled his weapon, and, amid the array,
Smote some across the gullet, cheek, or crown.
Screaming, the dissipated rabble fled;
The most with cloven limbs or broken head.

Rogero smites the head from six or four,
Who in escaping from the field are slow.
He to the breast divides as many more,
And countless to the eyes and teeth below.
I grant no helmets on their heads they wore,
But there were shining iron caps enow;
And, if fine helmets did their temples press,
His sword would cut as deep, or little less.

As hare from hound unslipt, that helpless train
Defends itself against the cavalier.
Many lay dead upon the cumbered plain,
And numberless were they who fled in fear.
Meanwhile the damsel had unloosed the chain
From the youth's hands, and him in martial gear
Was hastening, with what speed she might, to deck,
With sword in hand and shield about his neck.

He, who was angered sore, as best he could,
Sought to avenge him of that evil crew;
And gave such signal proofs of hardihood,
As stamped him for a warrior good and true.
The sun already in the western flood
Had dipt his gilded wheels, what time the two,
Valiant Rogero and his young compeer,
Victorious issued, of the city clear.

When now Rogero and the stranger knight,
Clear of the city-gates, the champaign reach,
The youth repays, with praises infinite,
Rogero in kind mode and cunning speech,
Who him, although unknown, had sought to right,
At risk of life, and prays his name to teach,
That he may know to whom his thanks he owed
For such a mighty benefit bestowed.

"The visage of my Bradamant I see,
The beauteous features and the beauteous cheer,"
Rogero said; "and yet the suavity
I of her well-known accents do not hear:
Nor such return of thanks appears to be
In place toward her faithful cavalier.
And if in very sooth it is the same,
How has the maid so soon forgot my name?"

In wary wise, intent the truth to find,
Rogero said, "You have I seen elsewhere;
And have again, and yet again, divined,
Yet know I not, nor can remember where.
Say it, yourself, if it returns to mind,
And, I beseech, your name as well declare;
Which I would gladly hear, in the desire
To know whom I have rescued from the fire."

"Me it is possible you may have seen,
I know not when nor where (the youth replied);
For I too range the world, in armor sheen,
Seeking adventure strange on every side;
Or haply it a sister may have been,
Who to her waist the knightly sword has tied;
Born with me at a birth; so like to view,
The family discerns not who is who.

And since the day that, wounded by a Moor
In the head (a story tedious to recite),
A holy man, to heal the damsel's sore,
Cut short to the mid-ear her tresses bright,
Excepting sex and name, there is no more
One from the other to distinguish: hight
I Richardetto am, Bradamant she;
Rinaldo's brother and his sister we.

"It so fell out, that as my sister through
The neighboring wood pursued her path, a wound
Was dealt the damsel by a paynim crew,
Which her by chance without a helmet found.
And she was fain to trim the locks that grew
Clustering about the gash, to make her sound
Of that ill cut which in her head she bore:
Hence, shorn, she wandered through the forest hoar.

"Ranging, she wandered to a shady font;
Where, worn and troubled, she, in weary wise,
Lit from her courser and disarmed her front,
And, couched upon the greensward, closed her eyes.
A tale more pleasing than what I recount
In story there is none, I well surmise:
Thither repaired young Flordespine of Spain,
Who in that wood was hunting with her train.

"And, when she found my sister in the shade,
Covered, except her face, with martial gear,
In place of spindle, furnished with the blade—
Believed that she beheld a cavalier.
The face and manly semblance she surveyed,
Till conquered was her heart. With courteous cheer
She wooed the maid to hunt with her, and past
With her alone into that holt at last.

"Her Flordespine accompanied some way,
Then, weeping, to her castle made return.
So fast my sister pricked, she reached that day
Mount Alban; we who for her absence mourn,
Mother and brother, greet the martial may,
And her arrival with much joy discern;
For, hearing nought, we feared that she was dead,
And had remained in cruel doubt and dread.

"Of Flordespine I knew; and I had seen
In Saragossa and in France the maid;
To whose bewitching eyes and lovely mien
My youthful appetite had often strayed;
Yet her I would not make my fancy's queen;
For hopeless love is but a dream and shade.
Now I this proffered in such substance view,
Straightway the ancient flame breaks forth anew.

"Love with this hope constructs his subtle ties;
Who other threads for me would vainly weave.
'Tis thus he took me, and explained the guise
In which I might the long-sought boon achieve.
Easy it were the damsel to surprise;
For as the likeness others could deceive,
Which I to Bradamant, my sister, bear,
This haply might as well the maid ensnare.

"Our love remained concealed between us two;
So that our bliss endured some months; at last
We were espied; and, as I sorely rue,
The tidings to the Spanish monarch past.
Thou that whilere preserved'st me from the crew,
Which me into the flames designed to cast,
By this mayst fully comprehend the rest;
But God alone can read my sorrowing breast."

So Richardetto spake, and by his say
Made the dark path they trod less irksome be.
Up a small height this while their journey lay,
Girdled with cliff and cavern, drear to see.
Bristling with rocks, a steep and narrow way
Was to that rugged hill the stubborn key;
A town, called Agrismonte, crowned the steep,
Which Aldigier of Clermont had in keep.

Bastard of Buovo, brother to the pair,
Sir Vivian and Sir Malagigi hight;
Who him Gerardo's lawful son declare,
Are witnesses of little worth and light.
—This, as it may!—strong, valiant, wise, and ware,
Liberal, humane, and courteous was the knight;
And on the fortress of its absent lord,
By night and day, kept faithful watch and ward.

His cousin Richardetto, as behoved,
Was courteously received by Aldigier;
Who him as dearly as a brother loved,
And made Rogero for his sake good cheer;
But not with wonted welcome; inly moved,
He even wore a visage sad and drear;
For he that day ill-tidings had received,
And hence in heart and face the warrior grieved.

To Richardetto he exclaims, instead
Of greeting: "Evil news are hither blown.
By a sure messenger to-day I read
That faithless Bertolagi, of Bayonne,
With barbarous Lanfusa has agreed,
And costly spoils makes over to that crone;
Who will consign to him the brethren twain,
Thy Malagigi and thy Viviane;

"These she, since Ferrau took them, aye has stayed
Imprisoned in a dark and evil cell;
Till the discourteous and foul pact was made
With that false Maganzese of whom I tell;
And them to-morrow, to a place conveyed
'Twixt Bayonne and a town of his, will sell
To him, who will be present, to advance
The price of the most precious blood in France.

Sir Richardetto the ill news displease,
And (as they him) displease in equal wise
Rogero; who, when silent both he sees,
Nor able any counsel to devise,
Exclaims with mickle daring; "Be at ease;
I challenge for myself the whole emprize;
And, to set free your brethren, in my hand
More than a thousand shall avail this brand.

"I ask not men, I ask not aid; my spear
Is, I believe, sufficient to the feat.
I only ask of you a guide to steer
Me to the place where for the exchange they meet:
I even in this place will make you hear
Their cries, who for that evil bargain treat."
He said; nor to one listener of the twain,
That had beheld his actions, spake in vain.

The other heard him not, or heard at most
As we great talkers hear, who little do;
But Richardetto took aside their host
And told how him he from the fire withdrew;
And how he was assured, beyond his boast,
He would in time and place his prowess shew.
'Twas now that better audience than before
Aldigier lent, and set by him great store;

Nor less to quit his Queen, her leave unsought,
Did with Rogero's other griefs combine:
Now this and now that care upon him wrought;
Which diversely his doubtful heart incline:
The unhappy lover fruitlessly had thought
To find her at the abode of Flordespine;
Whither together went (as told whilere),
To succor Richardetto, maid and peer.

He next bethinks him of the promise plight
To meet at Vallombrosa's sanctuary,
Deems her gone thtither, and that 'twill excite
Her wonderment himself not there to see.
Could he at least a message send or write,
That he with reason might not censured be,
Because not only he had disobeyed,
But was departed hence, and nothing said!

He, having thought on many things, in the end
Resolves on writing what behoves; and, though
He knows not how his letter he shall send,
In the assurance it will safely go,
This hinders not; he thinks that, as they wend,
Chance in his way some faithful post may throw,
Nor more delays; up leaps the restless knight,
And calls for pen and paper, ink and light.

"I fifteen days or twenty ask, that I
Yet once again may to our army speed;
So that, by me from leaguering enemy
The African cantonments may be freed:
I will some fit and just occasion spy,
Meanwhile, to justify my change of creed.
I for my honor make this sole request;
Then wholly yours for life, in all things, rest."

When he had closed the sheet, that amorous knight
His eyelids closed as well, and rest ensued:
For slumber came and steeped his wearied might
In balmy moisture, from a branch imbued
With Lethe's waters; and he slept till—white
And red—a rain of flowers the horizon strewed,
Painting the joyous east with colors gay,
When from her golden dwelling broke the day:

And when the greenwood birds 'gan, far and wide,
Greet the returning light with gladsome strain,
Sir Aldigier (who wished to be the guide,
Upon that journey, of the warlike twain,
Who would in succor of those brethren ride,
To rescue them from Bertolagi's chain)
Was first upon his feet; and either peer
Issues as well from bed, when him they hear.

Those three adventurous warriors halted where
A path went through the uncultivated plain,
And saw a knight arrive upon the lair,
Who, flourished o'er with gold, wore plate and chain,
And on green field that beauteous bird and rare,
Which longer than an age extends its reign.
No more, my lord; for at my canto's close
I find myself arrived, and crave repose.

CANTO XX

When those three of that warrior were espied,
Poised on the wing, as if about to smite,
He fain by proof their prowess would have tried,
And if their semblance tallied with their might.
"Is there, among you, one," the stranger cried,
"Will prove upon me which is best in fight,
With lance or sword, till one to ground be cast,
While in the sell his foe is seated fast?"

"I, at your choice," said Aldigier, "were fain
To flourish falchion, or to tilt with spear;
But this with feat, which, if you here remain,
Yourself may witness, so would interfere,
That for the present parley time with pain
Suffices, and still less for the career.
Six hundred men, or more, we here attend,
With whom we must to-day in arms contend.

"Two of our own to rescue from their foes,
And free from chains, us Love and Pity sway."
He to that stranger next the reason shows
Why thus in steel their bodies they array.
"So just is the excuse which you oppose,"
He answered, "that I ill should this gainsay,
And hold you surely for three cavaliers
That seldom upon earth will find their peers.

"With you a lance or two I would have crost
To prove how great your prowess in the field;
But, since 'tis shown me at another's cost,
Forego the joust, and to your reasons yield.
Warmly I pray your leave against that host,
To join with your good arms this helm and shield;
And hope, if suffered of your band to be,
No worthless comrade shall you find in me."

Some one, meseems, may crave the stranger's name,
Who thus the champions on their road delayed,
And so to partnership in arms laid claim
With those three warriors, for the strife arrayed:
She—style no more a man that martial dame—
Marphisa was, that on Zerbino laid
The task to bear about, against his will,
Ribald Gabrina, prone to every ill.

The two of Clermont and their bold compeer
Gladly received her succor in her cause,
Whom certes they believed a cavalier,
And not a damsel, and not what she was.
A banner was espied by Aldigier
And shown the others, after little pause,
Which by the wavering wind was blown about,
And round about it ranged a numerous rout.

And when, now nearer, the advancing crew
Were better marked in Moorish habit stoled,
For Saracens the stranger band they knew;
And they upon two sorry jades behold,
I' the middle of that troop, the prisoners, who
Were to the false Maganza to be sold.
Marphisa cries, "Why is the feast delayed,
When lo! the guests are here, for whom we stayed?"

"Not all," Rogero said, "of the array
Invited, lacks as yet a numerous part.
A solemn festival is held to-day,
And we, to grace it more, use every art;
Yet they can now but little more delay."
While thus they parley, they from other part
Descry the treacherous Maganzese advance;
So all was ready to begin the dance.

Nor Buovo's nor Duke Aymon's valiant son
Can hold, when that false Maganzese they view;
Against him both with rested lances run;
He falls the victim of those furious two,
Through belly and through pummel pierced by one,
And by the other, in mid visage, through
His bleeding cheeks. May like disastrous fate
O'erwhelm all evil doers, soon or late!

Marphisa with Rogero moved her horse
  At this, nor waited other trumpet-strain;
Nor broke her lance in her impetuous course,
  Till in succession three had prest the plain.
A mark well worthy fierce Rogero's force,
  The paynim leader in a thought is slain;
And with him, pierced by the same weapon, go
Two others to the gloomy realms below.

'Twas hence a foul mistake the assaulted made;
  It caused their utter loss, and ruined all:
They of Maganza deemed themselves betrayed
  By the infidels, upon their leader's fall;
On the other side, so charged with hostile blade,
  The Moors those Maganzese assassins call;
And, with fierce slaughter, either angry horde
'Gan bend the bow, and brandish lance and sword

Rogero, charging this or the other band,
  Slays ten or twenty, shifting his career;
No fewer by the warlike damsel's hand
  Are slaughtered and extinguished, there and here;
As many men as feel the murderous brand
  Are from the saddle seen to disappear;
Before it vanish cuirass, helms, and shields,
As the dry wood to fire in forest yields.

Not so Sir Richardet and Aldigier
  Varied the dance between those squadrons twain;
For, heedless of the Moors, each cavalier
  Had but an eye to false Maganza's train.
The brother of Rinaldo, Charles's peer,
  Much courage added to much might and main;
And these were now redoubled by the spite,
Which against false Maganza warned the knight.

Marphisa marvels at Rogero's blows;
  She marvels how in vain they never fell.
The iron, smit by Balisarda, shows
  Like paper, not like stubborn plate and shell.
To pieces helm and solid corslet goes,
  And men are severed, even to the sell;
Whom into equal parts those strokes divide,
Half dropt on this, and half on the other side.

With the same downright stroke, he overbore
  The horse and rider, bleeding in the dust;
The heads of others from their shoulders bore,
  And parted from the hips the bleeding bust.
He often at a blow cleft five and more;
  And—but I doubt who hears me might distrust
What of a seeming falsehood bears the impress—
I would say more; but I perforce say less.

The conqueror's prize remained both field and prey;
Nor was there footman left nor muleteer;
The Moor took this, Maganza took that way;
One leaves the prisoners, and one leaves the gear.
With visage glad, and yet with heart more gay,
The four untied each captive cavalier;
Nor were less diligent to free from chains
The prisoned pages, and unload the wains.

Besides good quantity of silver fine,
Wrought into different vessels, with a store
Of feminine array, of fair design,
Embroidered round about with choicest lore,
And suit of Flemish tapestry, framed to line
Royal apartments, wrought with silk and ore,
They, 'mid more costly things in plenty spread,
Discovered flasks of wine, and meat and bread.

When now the conquering troop their temples bare,
All see they have received a damsel's aid,
Known by her curling locks of golden hair,
And delicate and beauteous face displayed:
Her the knights honored much, and to declare
Her name, so well deserving glory, prayed;
Nor she, that ever was of courteous mood
Among her friends, their instances withstood.

With viewing her they cannot sate their eyes,
Who in the battle such had her espied,
She speaks but with the childe, but him descries,
None prizes, values none, 'twould seem, beside.
Meanwhile that ready spread a banquet lies,
To them is by the servants notified.
This they had served about a neighboring fountain,
Screened from the sun by an o'ershadowing mountain.

To converse gay the friends themselves addrest,
And seemly pastimes, when their meal was done,
Through the hot noontide, and fine carpets prest,
'Mid shrubs by which that limpid river run.
Vivian and Malagigi, that the rest
Might be more tranquil, watched with armor on;
When unaccompanied they saw a dame,
Who quickly toward their place of shelter came;

Hippalca she; from whom was torn away
Frontino, that good horse, by Rodomont:
Him had she long pursued the former day,
And now with prayer, now followed with affront.
Which booting nought, she had retraced her way,
To seek Rogero out in Agrismont;
And, how I know not, heard upon her round,
He here with Richardetto would be found.

She turned her wholly to Sir Richardet,
As bound direct to him; and, on his side,
He who well knew her, straight uprose and met,
And asked that damsel whitherward she hied.
Hippalca, with her eyes yet red and wet
From her long weeping, sighing deeply, cried,
But cried aloud, that young Rogero, near
The warrior she addrest, her tale might hear:

"I from Mount Alban with a courser sped,
So your good sister had commanded me—
A horse much loved by her, and highly bred;
Frontino is yclept that charger free;
And him I more than thirty miles had led
Toward Marseilles, where she designed to be
Within few days; by her enjoined to wend
Thither, and her arrival there attend.

"I in the sure belief pursued my course,
Was none so stout of heart, if I should say
How Sir Rinaldo's sister owned the horse,
He would presume to take that steed away.
But vain was my design; for him perforce
A Saracen took from me yesterday.
Nor, when to him his master's name I read,
Will that bold robber render back the steed."

At this Rogero, leaping on his feet,
Who scarcely had endured the whole to hear,
To Richardetto turned; and, as a meet
Guerdon for his good deed, the cavalier
Did, with beseechings infinite, entreat
To let him singly with that damsel steer,
Until she showed the paynim, who by force
Had wrested from her hands that goodly horse.

Richardet (though it seems discourtesy
To yield to other champion that emprize,
Which by himself should terminated be)
Yet with Rogero's earnest suit complies;
Who takes farewell of that good company,
And with the damsel on her journey hies.
And leaves those others, whom his feats confound,
Not merely lost in wonder, but astound.

To him Hippalca said, when she apart
Had drawn him to some distance from the rest,
She was despatched by her that in her heart
Bore of his worth the image so imprest;
And added, without using further art,
All that her lady had to him addrest;
And if she told another tale whilere,
Of Richardetto she was then in fear.

She added, how the author of that deed
Had also said to her with mickle pride:
"Because I know Rogero owns the steed,
More willingly I take him from his guide.
If he would repossess the courser, read
To him what I have no desire to hide,
I am that Rodomont whose martial worth
Scatters its splendor through this ample earth."

With him, without repose, the damsel rides,
Who with his foe would bring him front to front;
And thither journeys where the road divides,
And one branch cuts the plain, one climbs the mount,
And either pathway to that valley guides,
Where she had newly left King Rodomont.
The mountain track was short, but trod with pain;
That other longer far, but smooth and plain.

Hippalca's ardor to retrieve the prey,
And upon Rodomont avenge the wrong,
Incites that maid the mountain to assay;
By which, as said, the journey was less long:
While Mandricardo, Rodomont, and they
Of whom I erst made mention in my song,
That easier track across the level hold;
And thus encounter not Rogero bold.

Until King Agramant shall succored be,
Suspended is their quarrel (in what wise
You know), and in the champions' company
Doralice, cause of all their discord, hies.
Now hear the upshot of this history!
Their way directly by that fountain lies,
Beside whose margin are in pastime met
Marphisa and Aldigier and Richardet.

Marphisa had, at her companions' prayer,
Clothed her in female ornaments and vest,
Of those that by Maganza's traitor were
Late to Lanfusa, in full trust, addrest;
And, though the appearance of that maid was rare
Without her corslet, casque and all the rest,
At their entreaty, these for once laid down,
She deigned to seem a maid and donned the gown.

As soon as Mandricardo saw her face,
In trust that, could he win her in affray,
He would that maid, in recompense and place
Of Doralice, to Rodomont convey;
As if Love trafficked in such contracts base,
And lover could his lady change away,
Nor yet with reason at the event be pained,
If he in losing one another gained.

Hence with a damsel to provide the peer,
That he himself the other may retain;
Deeming her worthy any cavalier,
He would by force of arms the maid obtain;
And, as if he could suddenly hold dear
This maid as that, on him bestow the gain
And all of those, whom he about her spied,
Forthwith to joust and single fight defied.

Vivian and Malagigi (who were dight
In arms, as guard and surety for the rest)
One and the other champion prompt for fight,
Rose lightly from the herbage that they prest,
Deeming they had to joust with either knight;
But Rodomont, who came not on this quest,
No motion made as he a course would run;
So that they had to tourney but with one.

Sir Vivian is the first that moves his horse,
With mighty heart, and lays his weapon low;
And he, that Tartar king, renowned for force,
With greater puissance meets the coming foe.
His lance each warrior levels in the course
Where he best trusts to plant the furious blow.
Vainly Sir Vivian's spear the casque offends,
Nor throws that paynim knight, nor even bends.

That Tartar's harder weapon makes the shield
Of Vivian, at their onset, fly like glass;
And, tumbling from his saddle on the field,
Extends the champion amid flowers and grass.
To run his chance Sir Malagigi, steeled,
Did to his brother's succor quickly pass;
But (such that warrior's hurry to be near)
Rather accompanied, than venged the peer.

The other of those brethren armed before
His cousin, and had backed his courser wight;
And, having first defied, encountered sore,
Spurring with flowing rein, the stranger knight.
Against the tempered helm that pagan wore
Sounded the blow, an inch below the sight.
Heaven-high the truncheon flew, in fragments broke,
But the stout pagan winced not for the stroke.

Him on the left side smote that paynim peer,
And (for the blow was with huge force designed)
Little his shield and less his iron gear
Availed which opened like the yielding rind.
The weapon pierced his shoulder; Aldigier
Now right, now left upon his horse inclined;
Then him 'mid grass and flowers his comrades view
With arms of crimson, face of pallid hue.

Next Richardetto comes, and for the blow
Intended levels such a mighty lance,
He showed himself, as he was wont to show,
Worthy to be a paladin of France;
And had stamped signs of this upon the foe,
If he had warred on him with equal chance;
But prostrate rolled, encumbered by his steed;
Nor fell the courser through his lord's misdeed.

When knight appeared not on the other side,
Who should in joust the paynim king affront,
He thought the damsel was his prize, and hied
Thither, where she was seated by the front.
And "Lady, you are mine," the Tartar cried,
"Save other champion in your succor mount;
Nor can you make denial or excuse,
Since such the right of war and common use."

Marphisa raised her face with haughty cheer,
And answered him: "Thy judgment wanders far;
I will concede thy sentence would be clear,
Concluding I am thine by right of war,
If either were my lord or cavalier
Of those, by thee unhorsed in bloody jar:
Nor theirs am I, nor other's, but my own.
Who wins me, wins me from myself alone.

"I too with lance and sword do doughty deed,
And more than one good knight on earth have laid.
Give me," she cried, "my armor and my steed."
And readily her squires that hest obeyed.
Then in her waistcoat stood, of flowing weed
Despoiled, with well-knit form and charms displayed;
And in all points (such strength she showed and grace)
Resembled heavenly Mars, except her face.

The damsel donned her sword, when arm'd all o'er,
And on her courser leapt with nimble spring;
And, right and left, she made him, thrice or more
Poised on his haunches, turn in narrow ring.
And, levelling the sturdy lance she bore,
Defied, and next assailed, the Tartar king.
So combating with Peleus' son, of yore,
Penthesilæa warred on Trojan shore.

Like brittle crystal, in that proud career,
The weapons at the rest to pieces went;
Yet neither of those warriors, 'twould appear,
Backward one inch at their encounter bent.
Marphisa, who would willingly be clear
What of a closer fight would be the event,
For a new combat with the paynim lord,
Wheeled to attack the warrior with the sword.

That Tartar cursed the elements and sky,
When her he saw remaining in her sell;
And she, who thought to make his buckler fly,
Cursed heaven as loudly as that infidel.
Already were their falchions raised on high,
Which on the enchanted arms like hammers fell.
Enchanted arms both combatants enclose,
Never more needed by those deadly foes.

So perfect are the champions' plate and chain,
They thrust or cut of spear or falchion stay;
So that the two the battle might maintain,
Throughout this and throughout another day:
But Rodomont leaps in between the twain,
And taxes Mandricardo with delay;
Crying, "If battle here is to be done,
Finish we that which we to-day begun.

"We made a truce, thou knowest, upon pact
Of furnishing our baffled forces aid;
Nor foe in joust or fight can be attacked
By us with justice till this debt be paid."
Then to Marphisa he in reverent act
Addressed himself, and of that courier said;
And next recounted to the martial dame,
How seeking aid for Agramant he came.

Marphisa, who had evermore in thought
To prove the paladins of Charles, and who
To France was over land and ocean brought,
From clime so distant, with no other view,
Than by her own experience to be taught
If their far-spread renown were false or true,
Resolved together with the troop to speed,
As soon as she had heard their monarch's need.

Meanwhile Rogero, with that guiding may,
Had vainly by the rugged pathway sped;
Who that king Rodomont another way
Had taken, when he reached the mountain, read;
And thinking that he was not far away,
And the road straight toward that fountain led,
Trotting in haste behind the Sarzan hied,
Where he new prints upon the path espied.

Hippalca he to Mont Albano, prayed,
To wend, which distant one day's journey lies;
Because to seek anew that fountain-glade,
Would be to wander in too wide a guise.
And that she need not doubt withal, he said,
But that he would retrieve the ravished prize.
And, were she in Mount Alban—or where'er—
Vowed she the tidings speedily should hear.

And gave the letter to that maid to bear,
Which, writ by him, he in his bosom wore,
And added many matters, with the prayer,
She would excuse him by her friendly lore.
Hippalca in her memory fixt, with care,
The whole: took leave, and turned her horse once more:
Nor ceased that faithful messenger to ride
Till she Mount Alban reached at even-tide.

Rogero followed fast the paynim knight,
Tracked o'er the level by those footsteps new,
But overtook him not, till he got sight,
Beside the fount, of Mandricardo too.
Already either had his promised plight,
He nought unknown to his compeer would do,
Till they had succor to that host conveyed,
On which King Charles his yoke had nearly laid.

Arrived, Rogero knew Frontino gay,
And, through that courser, knew the knight astride:
And on his lance with bending shoulders lay,
And in fierce tone the African defied.
Job was outdone by Rodomont that day,
In that the King subdued his haughty pride,
And the fell fight that he had ever used
To seek with every instance, he refused.

The first day this and last that e'er in fight
King Rodomont refused his part to bear!
But his desire appeared to him so right,
In succor of his sovereign to repair;
That if he had believed he clutched the knight
Faster than nimble leopard gripes the hare,
He not so far his purpose would forego,
As on his prey to waste a passing blow.

Add, that he knows Rogero is the peer
Who him for good Frontino now assails;
So famous that no other cavalier
Like him such eminence of glory scales;
The man of whom he gladly would be clear,
By proof, how much in battle he avails;
Yet shuns the combat, proffered on his part;
So much his monarch's siege has he at heart.

Three hundred miles, a thousand, would he ride,
Were it not so, to purchase such affray;
But he, if him Achilles had defied,
Had done no otherwise than as I say;
So deeply did the covering ashes hide
That fire beneath whose fury stifled lay.
He told why he refused the strife; and prayed,
As well Rogero the design to aid.

Adding, that he, in doing so, would do
What to his lord a faithful vassal owes;
Still when the siege was raised, might they renew
And terminate their deadly strife by blows.
To him Rogero cried, "The fight with you
I freely will defer, till from his foes
King Agramant be rescued by the sword;
Provided first Frontino be restored.

"Would you that I delay to prove by deed,
That you have acted in unworthy sort,
Nor did like valiant man, to take my steed
Thus from a woman, till we meet at court,
Render me my Frontino back, or read,
Upon no other ground, will I support
That battle shall not be between us two;
Nor will accord an hour of truce to you."

While of that African he so demands
Frontino, or him threats with instant fray;
And either still the other's claim withstands,
Nor this the steed will grant, nor that delay;
King Mandricardo stirs, on the other hand,
Another strife; who sees that ensign gay
Rogero on his shield was wont to wear,
The bird that reigns o'er other fowls of air.

The Tartar and Rogero had before
Engaged in battle, only on this quest,
Divided by what accident, my lore
Recites not, as already manifest:
Nor had till now those knights encountered more:
When Mandricardo sees that bird imprest
On the childe's shield, he shouts with threatening cry
To young Rogero "Take my proud defy!

"Audacious man, mine ensign dost thou wear,
Nor this to-day for the first time, is said;
And think'st thou, madman, I will thee forbear,
Because for once to spare thee I was led?
But since nor menace nor yet counsel are
Of force to drive this folly from thy head,
It shall appear how much it has been best
For thee forthwith to have obeyed my hest."

As fire, whereon dry, heated wood is strown,
Roused by a little puff, at once ascends,
So burns Rogero's wrath, to fury blown,
By the first word with which that King offends.
"Thou thinkest," he exclaims, "to bear me down,
Because this knight as well with me contends:
But learn that I can win in fighting field
From him the horse, from thee good Hector's shield.

"Yet once before—nor is it long ago—
'Twixt us in battle was this question tried:
But I that day restrained the murderous blow,
Because thou hadst no falchion at thy side.
These shall be deeds, that strife was but a show;
And ill this argent bird shall thee betide;
This is the ancient bearing of my line;
'Tis thou usurpest what by right is mine."

"Say rather, thou usurpest mine from me,"
Cried Mandricardo; and that falchion drew
Which lately, underneath the greenwood tree,
Orlando from his hand in fury threw.
The childe who could not aught but courteous be
(Such was his gentle nature), at the view
Of Mandricardo, with his falchion drawn,
Let fall his ready lance upon the lawn;

And at the same time strained his goodly sword,
And better braced the covering shield he wore;
But 'twixt those combatants leapt Argier's lord,
And quick Marphisa spurred the pair before;
And one this foe, the other that implored,
And both besought, that they would strive no more.
King Rodomont complains the Tartar knight
Has violated twice the compact plight.

First in belief he should Marphisa gain,
He more than once had jousted for that fair;
Now to bear off Rogero's ensign fain,
He for King Agramant shows little care.
"If thus," said Rodomont, "you faith maintain,
To finish our own combat better were,
A cause of strife more fitting and more due
Than either of the pleas maintained by you.

"On this condition was the treaty plight,
And the accord between us now in force,
When I with thee shall have performed the fight,
I next shall answer him about the horse:
You then with him, if you survive, your right
Shall to the shield maintain in warlike course.
But I such work shall give you, I conceive,
As will small labor for Rogero leave."

"The bargain that thou hop'st thou shall not have,"
King Mandricardo answered Rodomont,
"I will accord thee more than thou dost crave,
And trust to make thee sweat from feet to front.
And to bestow on others, much shall save,
As water never fails in plenteous font;
And for Rogero and a thousand more,
And all the world beside reserve a store."

Marphisa, to appease the warriors bent,
Exclaimed, "Sirs, listen to my better lore;
A good remembrance 'tis, all argument
To leave until we Agramant restore.
If each is on his own design intent,
With Mandricardo will I strive once more;
And fain would see, according to his word,
If he can conquer me with spear and sword.

"But if to aid our sovereign, duty call,
Him let us aid, nor civil discord breed."
"To ground, through me, such project shall not fall,"
Rogero said, "so he restore my steed.
Let him resign that horse, or—once for all,
I say again—to his defence take heed.
I either here my parting breath will yield,
Or on my courser will return afield."

" 'Twere not so easy to obtain this quest
As 'twere that other," Rodomont replied,
And thus pursued: ."I unto thee protest,
If any evil shall our King betide,
Thine is the fault, not mine; for I am prest
To do whate'er is fitting, on my side."
Small heed to that protest Rogero paid,
And stung by fury, gripped his trenchant blade.

On Argier's King he sprang, like savage boar
Encountering him with shoulder and with shield
And him disordered and distrest so sore,
That with one stirrup's loss the monarch reeled.
"Rogero," Mandricardo cried, "give o'er,
Or else with me divide the battle-field;"
And struck, this said, with worse than felon spite,
Upon the morion of that youthful knight.

Even to his courser's neck Rogero bends;
Nor, when he would, himself anew can rear;
Because the sword of Ulien's son descends
As well upon the youthful cavalier;
And, but that adamant his face defends,
Across the cheeks his tempered helm would sheer.
The childe in anguish opens either hand;
And this the bridle drops and that the brand.

Him o'er the field his courser bears away.
On earth the falchion lies, which he let go:
Marphisa (with Rogero through that day,
Comrade in arms) appeared like fire to glow,
Enraged, that two one knight should overlay;
And, as magnanimous and stout, for foe
Singled King Mandricardo out, and sped,
With all her might, a stroke upon his head.

Rodomont o'er the plain pursues his man.
Another stroke, and he has lost the horse!
But Richardetto drives, and Vivian,
Between the childe and paynim in that course.
This warrior at the King of Argier ran,
And from Rogero severed him by force;
That (it was Vivian) in Rogero's hand,
Now from the blow recovered, placed his brand,

Rogero storms upon the paynim's crest;
And, could that knight recover his own brand,
Which by foul felony (as erst exprest)
Was ravished from the youthful warrior's hand,
I well believe that the descending pest
Rodomont's iron casque would ill withstand;
That casque which Babel's king bade forge, who sought
To war on Heaven in his presumptuous thought.

Rogero's blow was leveled with such spite
That this upon Frontino's crupper made
The helmet and the shell of iron smite,
In which that Saracen his limbs arrayed;
And he three times or four, to left and right,
As if about to fall, head-foremost, swayed;
And would have lost withal his trusty brand,
But that the hilt was fastened to his hand.

Marphisa has King Mandricardo prest
Meanwhile, and makes him sweat breast, front, and face;
And he Marphisa has as sore distrest;
But such good plates each valiant bosom case,
Impassable is either iron vest;
And both have hitherto maintained their place.
But, at a turn her martial courser made,
Marphisa needed young Rogero's aid.

Marphisa's martial steed, in turning short,
Where a firm footing that soft mead denied,
On the moist surface slipt, and in such sort,
That he fell, helpless, on his better side;
And, as he rose in haste and lacked support,
Athwart by furious Brigliador was plied;
On which the paynim, little courteous, came,
So that he fell anew beneath the dame.

Rogero, when Marphisa on the ground
He saw unhorsed, deferred no more his aid,
Who for that deed had leisure; since, astound,
Rodomont far away had been conveyed
He smote the morion which that Tartar crowned
And, cleft like stalk, his head on earth had laid,
Had he his trusty Balisarda borne,
Or Mandricardo other helmet worn.

Rodomont, of his senses repossest,
Turned round this while, and Richardetto spied;
And recollecting how, when late distrest,
He to Rogero succor had supplied,
Quickly against that youthful warrior prest;
Who an ill guerdon would from him abide,
Did Malagigi not his malice thwart
With other magic and with mickle art.

Sage Maglagigi versed in every sleight
Which by the wisest wizard can be done;
Although his book he has not, by whose might
He in his course can stop the passing sun;
The conjuration recollects and rite,
By which he tames the rebel fiends; and one
Bids enter into Doralice's steed,
Whom he to fury stings and headlong speed.

Into that gentle palfrey's form, who bore
The beauteous daughter of king Stordilane,
Sir Vivian's brother, simply by his lore,
Made pass an angel of the dark domain;
And the good horse, which never moved before,
Except in due obedience to the rein,
Now took a leap, possessed by that ill sprite,
Thirty feet long, and sixteen feet in height.

It was a mighty leap, yet not so wide
As to make any rider void the sell.
Seeing herself so high in air, loud cried,
Yielding herself for dead, that bonnibel.
Her palfrey, with the Dæmon for his guide
After his leap, runs, goaded by the spell,
The maid still screaming, such a furious course,
An arrow had not reached the flying horse,

At the first hearing of that voice the son
Of Ulien, on his part, the strife suspended;
And thither, where the furious palfrey run,
Swiftly in succor of the lady wended.
No less was by the Tartar monarch done;
Who neither childe nor damsel more offended;
But without craving time, or truce, or peace,
Pursued King Rodomont and Doralice.

Marphisa rose meanwhile, to fury stirred;
And, with disdain all over in a glow,
Thought to accomplish her revenge, and erred;
For at too great a distance was the foe.
Rogero, who beheld the war deferred,
Rather like lion roared than sighed. Well know
Those two their coursers they should vainly gore,
Following Frontino and good Brigliador.

Rogero will not halt till he renew
And end the unfinished combat for the horse;
Marphisa will not quit that Tartar, who
Will to her satisfaction prove his force.
To leave their quarrel in such guise the two
Esteem foul scandal; as their better course,
In chase of those offending knights to fare,
Is the conclusion of that valiant pair.

They in the paynim camp will find each foe,
If them before they find not on their way:
Whom thither bound to raise the siege they know,
Ere Charlemagne bring all beneath his sway.
So thitherward the twain directly go
Where these, they deem, will be their certain prey.
Yet not so rudely thence Rogero broke,
But that he first with his companions spoke.

CANTO XXI

A woman for the most part reasons best
Upon a sudden motion, and untaught;
For with that special grace the sex is blest,
'Mid those so many gifts wherewith 'tis fraught;
But man, of a less nimble wit possest,
Is ill at counsel, save, with sober thought,
He ruminate thereon, content to spend
Care, time and trouble to mature his end.

That seemed good counsel, but was ill indeed
Of Malagigi's, as before was said;
Albeit he so rescued in his need
His cousin Richardet, with odds o'erlaid,
When from the paynim monarchs him he freed
Be ready demon, who his hest obeyed;
For sure he never deemed they should be borne,
Where they would work the Christian army scorn.

The wayward fiend who makes that palfrey ramp
Bears off the frightened Doralice amain;
Nor river nor yet yawning ditch, or swamp,
Wood, rock, or rugged cliff, the steed restrain:
Till, traversing the French and English camp,
And other squadrons of the mingled train,
Beneath the holy flag of Christ arrayed,
He to Granada's King the fair conveyed.

'Tis of the valiant cousins I would speak:
Of these, Orlando of his wit bereft,
Naked, in sun or shower, by plain or peak,
Wanders about the world, a helpless weft.
And he, in wisdom little less to seek,
Rinaldo, in thy peril thee has left;
And, for in Paris-town she is not found,
In search of his Angelica is bound.

A cunning old enchanter him deceived,
As in the outset of my tale was said.
Deluded by a phantom, he believed
Angelica was with Orlando fled;
And hence with jealousy, at heart, aggrieved
(Lover ne'er suffered worse) to Paris sped;
Whence he, as soon as he appeared at court,
By chance, was named to Britain to resort.

Now, the field won, wherein with mickle fame
He drove King Agramant his works behind,
To Paris yet again the warrior came,
Searched convent, tower, and house, and, save confined
'Twixt solid walls or columns be the dame,
Her will the restless lover surely find.
Nor her nor yet Orlando he decries,
So forth in the desire to seek them hies.

He takes in Paris now a day's repose;
And, when he finds Orlando comes not there,
Again to Brava and Anglantes goes
Inquiring tidings of the royal fair;
Nor, whether morning dawns or noontide glows,
Nor night nor day, his weary steed does spare;
Not once, but twice a hundred times, has run
The self-same course, by light of moon or sun.

But the ancient foe, deluded by whose say,
To the forbidden fruit Eve raised her hand,
Turned his wan eyes on Charlemagne one day,
When he the good Rinaldo absent scanned,
And seeing what foul rout and disarray
Might at that time be given to Charles's band,
Of all the Saracens the choice and flower
Marshaled in arms against the Christian power.

King Sacripant and King Gradasso (who
Whilere companionship in war had made,
When from Atlantes' palace fled the two)
Together to unite their arms, in aid
Of royal Agramant's beleaguered crew,
And to the ruin of King Charles, he swayed;
And where through unknown lands the warriors hied,
Made smooth the way, and served them as a guide.

Thither another fiend that ruthless foe
Bade Rodomont and Mandricardo bear
Through ways by which his comrade was not slow
With the affrighted Doralice to fare.
A third, lest they their enterprise forego,
Rogero and Marphisa has in care:
But their conductor journeys not so fast;
And hence that martial pair arrives the last.

The first four ride until themselves they find
Where the besiegers and besieged they view;
And see the banners shaking in the wind,
And the cantonments of those armies two.
Here they short counsel took, and next opined,
In spite of Charlemagne's beleaguering crew,
To carry speedy succor to their liege,
And rescue royal Agramant from siege.

Where thickest camped lay Charles's host, they spurred,
Closing their files against the Christian foe.
"Afric and Spain!" is the assailants' word,
Whom at all points the Franks for paynims know.
"To arms, to arms!" throughout their camp is heard;
But first is felt the Moorish sabre's blow;
Even on the rear-guard falls the vengeful stroke,
Not charged alone, but routed, beat and broke.

The Christian host throughout is overthrown,
And how, they know not, in tumultuous wise;
And that it is a wonted insult done
By Switzer or by Gascon, some surmise;
But, since the reason is to most unknown,
Each several nation to its standard flies,
This to the drum, that to the trumpet's sound,
And shriek and shout from earth to heaven redound.

All armed is Charlemagne, except his head,
And, girt with paladins, his faithful stay,
Arrived demanding what alarm has bred
Disorder in his host and disarray;
And stopped with menace this or that who fled,
And many fugitives, upon their way,
Some with maimed face, breast, arm, or hand, espied,
And some with head or throat with life-blood dyed.

Where the small band advances in such wise,
Deserving well eternal praise to gain,
Vouching their deeds, a long-drawn furrow lies,
A signal record of their might and main.
His army's cruel slaughter, with surprise,
Anger and rage, is viewed by Charlemagne.
So he whose shattered walls have felt its force,
Throughout his mansion tracks the lightning's course.

Not to the ramparts of the paynim crew
Of Agramant as yet had pierced this aid,
When, on the farther side, those other two,
Rogero and Marphisa, thither made.
When, once or twice, that worthy pair a view
Have taken of the ground, and have surveyed
The readiest way assistance to afford,
They swiftly move in succor of their lord.

Front and askance, the assailants smote, and low
On earth, heads, arms, and severed shoulders lay,
Where'er the Christian squadrons were too slow
To free the path and break their close array.
Whoe'er has seen the passing tempest blow,
And of the hill or valley, in its way,
One portion ravage and another leave,
May so their course amid that host conceive.

Marphisa and the childe, of danger clear,
Enter the paynim ramparts; and with eyes
Upturned, the Saracens, with humble cheer,
Thank Heaven for the success of that emprize.
The paladins no longer are their fear;
The meanest Moor a hundred Franks defies;
And 'tis resolved, without repose, again
To drench with Christian blood the thirsty plain.

At once a formidable larum rose;
Horns, drums, and shrilling clarions filled the skies;
And the wind ruffles, as it comes and goes,
Banner and gonfalon of various dyes.
The Germans and the warlike Bretons close;
Ranged on the other part, in martial wise,
Italians, English, French, were seen, and through
Those armies furious war blazed forth anew.

Many through reckless haste were drowned in Seine,
For all too narrow was the bridge's floor,
And wished, like Icarus, for wings in vain,
Having grim death behind them and before.
Save Oliver, and Ogier hight the Dane,
The paladins are prisoners to the Moor;
Wounded beneath his better shoulder fled
The first, that other with a broken head.

From earth beneath the widow's outcry swells,
Mingled with elder's and with orphan's prayer,
Into the pure serene, where Michael dwells,
Rising above this dim and troubled air;
And to the blest archangel loudly tells,
How the devouring wolf and raven tear
His faithful English, French and German train,
Whose slaughtered bodies overspread the plain.

Red blushed the blessed angel, who believed
He ill obedience to his lord had paid;
And, in his anger, deemed himself deceived
By the perfidious Discord and betrayed.
He his Creator's order had received
To stir the Moors to strife, nor had obeyed;
Had rather, in their eyes who marked the event,
Appeared throughout to thwart his high intent.

Again he to that monastery flew,
Where whilom he had Discord seen; and there
Seated in chapter sees her, while anew
Their yearly officers elected are,
She taking huge delight those friars to view,
That at each other hurled their books of prayer.
His hand within her locks the archangel twists,
And deals her endless scathe with feet and fists.

On her he next a cross's handle broke;
Wherewith her back, and arms, and head he plies:
His mercy with loud voice the wretch bespoke,
And hugged that angel's knees with suppliant cries.
Michael suspends not the avenging stroke
Till hunted to the Moorish camp she flies,
Then thus; "Believe worse vengeance yet in store,
If I beyond these lines behold thee more."

Then good Rogero (she inflames them so)
With Rodomont and Mandricardo fares
To Agramant; and all (since now the foe
The paynims pressed no more, the vantage theirs)
To him the seed of their dissensions show,
And what the bitter produce that it bears:
Then to the judgment of the King refer
Who first in listed field his claim should stir.

King Agramant, with prayer and kindly word,
Had willingly appeased that jarring crew;
But since the foes were deaf to all accord,
Nor would assent to peace or truce anew,
Considered how at least he might afford
The field to each of them in order due;
And, as the best resolve, at last decreed,
Each should by lot possess the listed mead.

Four lots the monarch bade prepare, which done,
This "Rodomont and Mandricardo" said;
"Rogero and Mandricardo" were in one;
In one, "Rogero and Rodomont" were read;
That "Mandricardo and Marphisa" run:
Next, as the fickle goddess, Fortune, led,
The lots are drawn, and in the first appear
The Tartar King and sovereign of Argier.

Rogero and Mandricardo for that play
  Were next; Rogero and Rodomont were third;
Marphisa's lot and Mandricardo's lay
  At bottom; whence the dame was deeply stirred;
Nor young Rogero seems a whit more gay;
  Who knows the prowess of those two preferred
Will nothing in the listed combat leave
For him or for Marphisa to achieve.

There lies a place, of Paris little wide,
  Covering a mile or somewhat less, and round;
Like ancient theater, on every side,
  Encompassed by a tall and solid mound;
With castle whilom was it fortified,
  Which sword and fire had leveled with the ground.
The Parmesan like circle does survey,
Whenever he to Borgo wends his way.

In this place is prepared the listed mead,
  Which palisades of little height inclose;
A square, of just proportions for that need,
  With two capacious gates, as usage goes.
The day on which to combat have agreed
  Those valiant knights, who will not balk their foes,
Beside the palisades, to left and right,
Facing each entrance, are pavilions pight.

High on a throne of ample state appeared
  Agramant and Marsilius; next in place
Were Stordilane and all the chiefs, revered
  Throughout the squadrons of the paynim race
Happy was he who found himself upreared
  On mound or tree, above that level space.
Great was the throng, and round the palisade
On every side the eddying people swayed.

In dress succinct Marphisa sate; in plight
  Such as beseemed a warrior and a maid.
Thermodoön haply witnessed Hippolyte
  And her fair squadron in like garb arrayed.
Afield already, in his livery dight,
  Agramant's herald made proclaim, and said,
It was forbid to all men, far and wide,
In act or word, with either part to side.

The frequent crowd expects the double foe;
  And often, in impatience, they complain,
And call those famous cavaliers too slow;
  When from the Tartar's tent an angry strain
Is heard, and cries that multiply; sir, know
  It was the martial King of Sericane,
And puissant Tartar, who that question stirred,
And made the mighty tumult that was heard.

Sericane's monarch, having with his hand
Equipped the King of Tartary all o'er,
Approached to gird him with that sovereign brand
With which Orlando went adorned of yore.
When Durindana on the hilt he scanned,
Graved with the quartering that Almontes wore;
Which from that wretched man, beside a font,
Youthful Orlando reft in Aspramont.

He, seeing this, agnized it for the blade
So famous, that Anglantes' warrior bore,
For which he had the fairest fleet arrayed
That ever put to sea from eastern shore;
And had Castile's rich kingdom overlaid,
And conquered fruitful France some years before;
But cannot now imagine how that sword
Is in possession of the Tartar lord;

And asks, had he by force or treaty won,
And when and where and how, that falchion bright;
And Mandricardo said that he had done
Fierce battle for that sword with Brava's knight,
Who feigned himself of sober sense foregone
Hoping that so he should conceal his fright;
"For I on him would ceaseless war have made,"
He added, "while he kept the goodly blade."

The other, mastered by his choler, flies
With a clenched fist at him of Sericane,
And smites him with his right hand in such wise,
As makes him quit his hold of Durindane.
Gradasso bold was taken by surprise,
Not deeming him so furious and insane;
And, while he looked not to the Tartar lord,
Found himself robbed of good Orlando's sword.

"Come on in arms against me, both combined,
And Rodomont," so Mandricardo said,
"Come Spain and Afric and all human kind;
Ne'er will I turn." And he, at nought dismayed,
So saying, in his fury, sawed the wind
About him, with Almontes' noble blade,
Embraced his shield, and, full of choler, stood
Against Gradasso and Rogero good.

"Leave me the care," the fierce Gradasso cried,
"The frenzy of this madman to subdue."
"Not so, by Heaven!" Rogero wroth replied,
"For I this field claim justly as my due."
"Stand back!" and "Stand thou back!" on either side
They shout; yet neither of the twain withdrew.
And thus among those three began a feud;
And thence some strange result would have ensued,

If many had not interposed, and sought
With little wit their fury to restrain;
Who had well-nigh too dear the experience bought
Of saving others at their proper pain;
Nor to accord the world had ever brought
Those knights, but that the worthy King of Spain
Came thither with renowned Troyano's heir;
Awed by whose sovereign presence all forbear.

While royal Agramant would peace restore,
And now with this and now with that conferred,
From the other tent, between the Sarzan Moor
And Sacripant, another strife was heard.
Valiant King Sacripant (as said before)
To equip Sir Rodomont himself bestirred,
And he and Ferrau had that champion drest
In his forefather Nimrod's iron vest;

And there had they arrived, where with his spume
The horse was making his rich bridle white:
I of the good Frontino speak, for whom
Rogero raged with yet unfelt despite.
King Sacripant, who plays the part of groom,
And has to bring afield the Sarzan knight,
Marks narrowly the courser's gear and shoes,
And sell and furniture throughout reviews.

Assured 'twas no mistake, Circassia's chief
Turned him about to Rodomont, and cried;
"Reft from me in Albracca, by a thief,
This horse is mine; which might be certified
By them whose words would warrant well belief.
But as my witnesses are distant wide,
If it be questioned, I will make it plain,
And will, with sword in hand, the truth maintain.

"Yet am I well contented, for that we
Have for these some few days together gone,
To lend him for to-day; since well I see,
That not without him could the fight be done;
But on condition, that the courser be
Acknowledged mine, and furnished as a loan:
Otherwise hope not for that horse, save first
Me, on this quarrel, thou in combat worst."

The furious King of Argier, that in pride
Surpassed all knights that ever girt the sword,
Whose paragon, for heart and prowess tried,
Meseems no ancient histories record,
Cried; "Sacripant, if any one beside
Thyself, to me should utter such a word,
He should deem quickly, from its bitter fruit,
He from his birth would better have been mute."

They from dispute proceed to ribaldry,
From words to blows; and through their mickle ire,
Fierce battle was inflamed, and blazed more high
Than ever lightly kindled straw took fire.
King Rodomont is steeled in panoply;
Sacripant neither plate nor mail attire;
Yet so in fence is skilled that nimble lord,
He seems all over sheltered by his sword.

But Serpentine and Ferrau interfere;
They with drawn swords the twain asunder bore;
With them Grandonio was, and Isolier,
And many other leaders of the Moor.
This was the tumult that was heard whilere
In the other tent, what time they labored sore
Rogero vainly to a peace to bring
With Tartary's and Serïcana's King.

This while some voice to Agramant the news
Reports aright, that Uljen's mighty seed,
With Sacripant, Circassia's King, pursues
A fierce and furious quarrel for the steed.
Agramant, whom so many jars confuse,
Exclaims to King Marsilius: "Take thou heed
That no worse evil mid these knights betide,
While for this new disorder I provide."

Circassia's monarch would not, on his side,
Longer his horse to Argier's lord allow,
Save humbly Rodomont to him applied,
That steed for this occasion to bestow.
To him Sir Rodomont, with wonted pride,
Returned for answer: "Neither Heaven nor thou
Shall make me recognize as gift or loan
What I with this good hand can make mine own."

The King bade Sacripant explain his right,
And how that horse was taken from him sought;
And this from first to last Circassia's knight
Rehearsed, and reddened as the tale he taught,
Relating to the King the robber's sleight;
Who had surprised him overwhelmed with thought,
Upon four spears his courser's saddle stayed,
And from beneath the naked horse conveyed.

Marphisa. whom these cries, mid others, bring,
When of the robbery of the horse advised,
In visage is disturbed, remembering
How on that day her falchion was surprised;
And when that courser (which equipt with wing
Appeared when flying her) she recognized;
And recognized as well, at first unknown,
The valiant King that filled Circassia's throne.

The others who stood round her, wont to hear
  Brunello often boast of the deceit,
'Gan turn toward that wretch, and made appear
  By open signs they knew him for the Cheat.
Marphisa who the subtle knave whilere
  Suspected as the author of that feat,
Now questions this, now that, who all accord
In saying 'twas Brunello stole her sword;

Who, well deserving as a fitting pain
  To dangle from the gallows-tree in air,
By Agramant the crown of Tingitane
  (An ill example) was preferred to wear.
This fires anew Marphisa's old disdain,
  Nor she from instant vengeance will forbear,
For this as well as other shame and scorn
She on her road had from that caitiff borne.

A squire laced on her helmet, at her hest;
  She wore the remnant of her armor sheen;
Nor without martial cuirass on her breast.
  Find I that she ten times was ever seen,
Even from the day when first that iron vest
  Braced on her limbs the passing-valiant queen;
With helm on head, where, mid the highest rows,
Brunello sits among the first, she goes.

Him by mid breast Marphisa gripped amain,
  And lifted up the losel from the ground;
As is rapacious eagle wont to strain
  The pullet, in her talons circled round;
And bore him where the son of King Troyane
  Heard the two knights their jarring claims propound.
He who perceives himself in evil hands,
Aye weeps, and mercy of that maid demands.

Above the universal noise and shout,
  Which rose nigh equally on either side,
Brunello, who from all the crowd about
  For pity now, and now for succor, cried,
So loud was heard, that of that ample rout
  He gathered round himself the pressing tide.
Arrived before the Moorish army's head,
To him with haughty mien Marphisa said:

"This thief," said she, "thy vassal, will I slay,
  And with this hand of mine will knot the cord
About his neck; because the very day
  He stole his courser, he purloined my sword.
But is there any one who deems I say
  Amiss, let him stand forth and speak the word;
For I on him will prove, before thine eyes
I have done right, and who gainsays me, lies.

"I hence to yonder tower, which distant nigh
Three leagues, o'erlooks a little copse, repair,
But with one varlet in my company,
And with one waiting-maid. If any dare
Rescue the thief, let him come thither; I
Wait the approach of his defenders there."
Thus she; and thither quickly wends her ways
Whither was said, nor any answer stays.

Held on the pommel grappled by his hair,
Brunello on Marphisa's courser lies;
The caitiff weeps and shrieking in despair,
On all in whom he hopes for succor cries.
In such confusion is Troyano's heir,
He sees no way through these perplexities;
And, that Marphisa thence Brunello bore
In such a guise, yet grieved the monarch more.

Not that he loved the losel or esteemed,
Rather to him some time had borne despite;
And often had to hang the caitiff schemed,
Since he had forfeited the ring of might.
But here his honor touched the monarch deemed,
So that his visage reddened at the slight.
He would in person follow her at speed,
And to his utmost power avenge the deed.

But the wise King, Sobrino, who was by,
Him from the quest endeavored to dissuade,
And that with his exalted majesty
Such enterprise were ill assorted, said;
Although firm hope, nay full security,
He had to overcome that martial maid,
If he with pain subdued a woman, shame,
Rather than honor, would pursue his name.

"Thou to the fierce Marphisa may'st apply
To leave his trial (he pursued) to thee,
With promise, her in this to satisfy,
And to suspend him from the gallows-tree:
And even should the maid thy prayer deny,
Let her in every wish contented be;
And rather than that she desert thy side,
Let her hang him and every thief beside."

Right willingly King Agramant gave way
To King Sobrino's counsel sage and staid;
And let renowned Marphisa wend her way,
Nor scathed he, nor let scathe, that martial maid
Neither endured that any her should pray;
And heaven knows with what courage he obeyed
That wise advice, to calm such ruder strife
And quarrel as throughout his camp were rife.

Paris-town rocked, and turbid ran the flood
  Of Seine at that loud voice, that horrid roar;
And, so its echo rang in Arden's wood,
  Beasts left their caverns in that forest hoar,
Alp and the Cevenne's mountain-solitude,
  And Blois, and Arles, and Rouen's distant shore,
Rhine, Rhône, and Saône, and Garonne, heard the pest.
Scared mothers hugged their children to their breast.

Five have set up their rest, resolved to be
  The first their different quarrels to conclude:
And tangled so is one with other plea,
  That ill Apollo's self could judge the feud.
To unravel that first cause of enmity
  The King began—the strife which had ensued,
Because of beauteous Doralice, between
The King of Scythia and her Algerine.

King Agramant oft moved, between the pair,
  Now here, now there, to bring them to accord;
Now there, now here, admonishing that pair,
  Like faithful brother and like righteous lord:
But when he found that neither would forbear,
  Deaf and rebellious to his royal word,
Nor would consent that lady to forego,
The cause of strife, in favor of his foe,

As his best lore, at length the monarch said,
  And to obey his sentence both were fain,
That he who was by her preferred, should wed
  The beauteous daughter of King Stordilane;
And that what was established on this head
  Should not be changed, to either's loss or gain,
The compromise was liked on either side,
Since either hoped she would for him decide.

The mighty King of Sarza, who long space
  Before the Tartar had loved Doralice
(Who had preferred that sovereign to such grace
  As modest lady may, nor do amiss)
Believed, when she passed sentence on the case,
  She must pronounce what would ensure his bliss.
Nor thus alone King Rodomont conceived,
But all the Moorish host with him believed.

All know what exploits wrought by him had been
  For her in joust and war; they all unsound
And weak King Mandricardo's judgment ween;
  But he, who oft was with her on their round,
And oftener private with the youthful Queen,
  What time the tell-tale sun was under ground,
He, knowing well how sure he was to speed,
Laughed at the silly rabble's idle creed.

They, after, ratify the King's award,
Between his hands, and next the suitors wain
Before that damsel go, that on the sward
Fixing her downcast eyes, in modest vein,
Avows her preference for the Tartar lord;
At which sore wondering stand the paynim train;
And Rodomont remains so sore astound,
He cannot raise his visage from the ground.

But wonted anger chasing shame that dyed
The Sarzan's face all over, he arraigned
The damsel's sentence, of the falchion, tied
About his manly waist, the handle strained,
And in the King's and others' hearing cried:
"By this the question shall be lost or gained;
And not by faithless woman's fickle thought,
Which thither still inclines where least it ought."

King Mandricardo on his feet once more,
Exclaims, "And be it as it pleases thee."
So that ere yet the vessel made the shore
Unploughed remained a mighty space of sea;
But that his King reproved the Sarzan sore,
Ruling, that to appeal upon that plea
No more with Mandricardo could avail,
And made the moody Sarzan strike his sail.

Branded with double scorn, before those peers,
By noble Agramant, whose sovereign sway
He, as in loyal duty bound, reveres,
And by his lady on the selfsame day,
There will no more the monarch of Algiers
Abide, but of his band, a large array,
Two sergeants only for his service takes,
And with that pair the paynim camp forsakes.

Rogero moved his courser to regain,
And had already donned his warlike gear,
Then recollecting that on listed plain
At Mandricardo he must couch the spear,
Followed not Rodomont, but turned his rein,
To end his quarrel with the Tartar, ere
He met in combat Sericana's lord
Within close barriers, for Orlando's sword.

To have Frontino ravished in his sight,
And be unable to forbid the deed,
He sorely grieves; but, when he shall that fight
Have done, resolves he will regain the steed;
But Sacripant, whom, like the youthful knight,
No quarrels in the Moor's pursuit impede,
And who was unengaged in other quest,
Upon the Sarzan's footsteps quickly prest;

And would have quickly joined him that was gone,
But for the chance of an adventure rare;
Which him detained until the day was done,
And made him lose the track of Ulien's heir;
A woman who had fallen into the Saône,
And who without his help had perished there,
The warrior drowning in that water found,
And stemmed the stream and dragged the dame aground.

When afterward he would remount the sell,
From him his restless charger broke astray,
And fled before his lord till evening fell,
Nor lightly did the King that courser stay.
At last he caught him; but no more could spell
Where he had wandered from the beaten way.
Two hundred miles he roved, 'twixt hill and plain,
Ere he came up with Rodomont again.

Meanwhile the Saracen pours forth his moan,
With rage against his liege and love possest;
And on his way is by long journeys gone,
Giving himself and courser little rest.
The following day or next, upon the Saône
He finds himself, who has his course addrest
Toward the coast of Provence, with design
To his African domain to cross the brine.

The King of Argier (for the dusky air
Of night began upon the world to close)
Here listened to a village-landlord's prayer,
That in his inn besought him to repose.
His courser stalled, the board with plenteous fare
Is heaped, and Corsic wine and Grecian flows,
For, in all else a Moor, the Sarzan drank
Of the forbidden vintage like a Frank.

And having stopped all question in this wise,
The paynim monarch from the table rose;
Then lays him on his bed, till from the skies
The dusky shades depart, and morning glows:
But spends a larger part of night in sighs
At his liege lady's sin than in repose.
Rodomont thence departs at dawn of day,
Resolved by water to pursue his way.

For with such care for his good horse's plight,
As is becoming a good cavalier,
The courser fair and good, made his in spite
Of young Rogero and Circassia's peer;
Seeing he, for two days, that horse's might
Had taxed too hardly in his long career,
As well he for his ease embarked the steed,
As to pursue his way with better speed.

He straight makes launch the vessel from the marge,
And bids put forth the oars from either side;
Nor big nor deeply laden, she, at large,
Descends the Saône, transported by the tide.
Care never quits him, though the shifting barge
The King ascend, or nimble horse bestride;
This he encounters aye on prow or poop,
And bears behind him on his courser's croup.

Rather within his head or heart always
Care sits; whence every comfort is o'erthrown:
No remedy the wretched man surveys,
In that his enemies are in the town.
From others hope is none; since they who raise
This fearful war against him, are his own;
Vext by that cruel one, aye night and day,
Whom he might hope to find his natural stay.

Rodomont navigates the day and night
Ensuing, aye by heavy thoughts opprest;
Nor can he ever banish the despite,
Suffered from king and lady, from his breast.
The self-same grief sat heavy on his sprite
Aboard the bark, as when his steed he prest.
Such fire was not by water to be drowned,
Nor he his nature changed by changing ground.

Rodomont brooked no more aboard to stay,
But bade them land him, and by Lyons hied;
By Vienne and Valence next took his way,
And the rich bridge in Avignon descried.
For these and more, which 'twixt the river lay
And Celtiberian hills upon that side
(Theirs, from the day they conquered the champaign),
Obeyed the kings of Afric and of Spain.

To pass to Afric straight, the cavalier
Kept to the right toward Acquamorta's shore,
And lighted on a stream and hamlet, dear
To Ceres and to Bacchus, which that Moor
Found quitted by the peasants, in their fear
As often by the soldier harried sore.
The beach upon one side broad ocean laved,
And on the other yellow harvests waved.

Here, newly built upon a hillock's crest,
A little church the Saracen espied;
Abandoned by its priesthood, like the rest,
For war was flaming upon every side.
Rodomont of this place himself possest;
Which, from its site, as well as lying wide
Of fields, from whence he tidings loathed to hear,
So pleased him, he for it renounced Argier.

Here standing, full of thought, upon a day,
(Such was his common wont) the paynim spied,
Advancing by a narrow path, which lay
Through a green meadow, from the adverse side,
A lovely damsel that upon her way
Was by a bearded monk accompanied;
And these behind them led a lusty steed,
Which bore a burden, trapped with sable weed.

Who that attendant monk and damsel were,
And what that burden, will to you be clear,
Remembering Isabella in the fair,
Charged with the corse of her Zerbino dear:
I left her where from Provence, in the care
Of that good sire, she bound herself to steer,
By whom persuaded, had the lady given
The remnant of her virtuous life to heaven.

As soon as he of Sarza saw appear
The beauteous dame, he laid the thought aside
Of hatred to that gentle race and dear,
By whom alone the world is glorified;
And best by Isabel the cavalier
Believed his former love would be supplied,
And one love by another be effaced,
As bolt by bolt in timber is displaced.

Her with the kindest mien and mildest tone
That he could fashion, met the Sarzan knight;
To whom the dame her every thought made known;
And said, when she was questioned of her plight,
She would with holy works, this world foregone,
Seek favor in her Heavenly Father's sight.
Loud laughed that godless paynim at the thought,
Who every faith and worship held at nought;

And said that she from reason wandered wide,
And termed her project sudden and unsound;
Nor deemed her less to blame than those who hide,
Through greediness, their treasure under ground,
And keep it from the use of all beside,
Though hence no profit to themselves redound.
Rightly were prisoned lion, snake, and bear,
But ill whate'er is innocent and fair.

The monk, that to this talk has lent an ear,
Prompt with advice that mournful dame to stay,
And lest she quit her course prepared to steer
His bark, like practised pilot, on her way,
A sumptuous table, rich in spiritual cheer,
Had speedily bestirred him to array;
But, born with evil taste, that paynim rude
No sooner tasted than he loathed the food.

And having interrupted him in vain,
Nor having power to make him stint his lore,
That paynim, stirred to fury, broke the rein
Of patience, and assailed the preacher hoar.
But haply wearisome might seem the strain,
If I upon this theme dilated more:
So here I close, nor words will idly spend,
Admonished by that ancient's evil end.

CANTO XXII

Then, as new love the King did heat and goad,
He moved some arguments of small avail,
To shake her steadfast spirit, which abode
Wholly with God; but he, her shield and mail,
That hermit, lest she from the better road
Should wander, and her chaste intention fail,
With stronger arguments with him contended,
And still, as best he could, the dame defended.

The King, who long had taxed himself to bear
The monk's bold sermon to his sore displeasure,
And vainly bade him to his cell repair
Anew, without that damsel, at his leisure,
Yet seeing he would still his patience dare,
Nor peace with him would keep, nor any measure,
Upon that preacher's chin his right hand laid,
And whatsoe'er he grasped, as rudely flayed.

And (so his fury waxed) that, as it were
With tongs, he gripped his neck, and after he
Had whirled him once or twice about in air,
Dismissed him from his hand toward the sea.
I say not, know not, what befel him there;
Many rumors are, and disagree.
One says, he burst upon a rock's rude bed,
And lay one shapeless jelly, heels and head.

And now, so temperate showed that infidel,
'Twould seem that he no violence designed,
The gentle semblance of fair Isabel,
Enamoring him, so tamed his haughty mind;
And, though he might that goodly kernel shell,
The paynim would not pass beyond the rind,
Who that its flavor would be lost believed,
Unless 'twere as a gift from her received;

And by degrees so thought to mould the dame
To his desires. She in that lone retreat
And savage, open to his evil aim,
And like a mouse beneath Grimalkin's feet,
Had liefer found herself i' the midst of flame;
And ever on one thought her fancy beat;
If any mode, if any way, remained
To scape that wilful man, untouched, unstained.

Sad Isabella in her mind is bent
To slay herself with her own hand, before
The fell barbarian compass his intent;
And be the means to make her wrong so sore
That cavalier, by cruel Fortune spent,
Within her loving arms, to whom she swore
With mind to him devoted, his to be,
Vowing to Heaven perpetual chastity.

She sees that paynim monarch's passion blind
Increasing still, nor what to do she knows;
Well knows what foul intention is behind,
Which she is all too feeble to oppose;
Yet moving many matters in her mind,
Finds out at last a refuge for her woes,
And means to save her chastity from shame
(How I shall say) with clear and lasting fame.

She cried unto that paynim, foul to see,
Already threatening her with word and act,
And now devoid of all that courtesy,
Which he in the beginning did enact,
"If thou mine honor wilt ensure to me,
Beyond suspicion, I, upon this pact,
Will upon thee bestow what shall o'erpay,
By much, that honor thou wouldst take away.

"For pleasure, which endures so brief a space,
Wherewith this ample world does so o'errun,
Reject not lightly a perpetual grace,
A real joy, to be postponed to none.
Of women everywhere of pleasing face
A hundred and a thousand may be won;
But none beside me, or few others, live
Who can bestow the boon that I can give.

"I know, and on my way an herb did view,
And nearly know where I on this could light,
Which, being boiled with ivy and with rue,
Over a fire with wood of cypress dight,
And squeezed, when taken from the cauldron, through
Innocent hands, affords a juice of might,
Wherewith whoever thrice his body laves,
Destructive steel or fire securely braves.

"If thrice therewith he bathe himself, I say,
His flesh no weapon for a month shall score:
He once a month must to his body lay
Mine unction, for its virtue lasts not more:
This liquor can I make, and will to-day,
And thou to-day shalt also prove my lore:
And well, I trust, thou shalt more grateful be,
Than were all Europe won to-day by thee.

"In guerdon for this present, I request.
That thou to me upon thy faith wilt swear,
Thou never wilt my chastity molest
In word or deed." So spake that damsel fair;
And Rodomont who heard, again represt
His evil will; for so he longed to bear
A charmed life, that readily he more
Than Isabel of him demanded swore;

And will maintain his promise, till the fact
Vouched of that wondrous water shall appear;
And force himself, meanwhile, to do no act,
To show no sign of violence; but the peer
Resolves he will not after keep the pact,
As one who holds not God or saint in fear;
And to that King, regardless of his oath,
All lying Afric yields in breach of troth.

Argier's perfidious King to Isabel
More than a thousand times assurance swore,
In case that water rendered him what fell
Achilles and what Cygnus were of yore.
She, aye by beetling cliff and darksome dell,
Away from city and from farm, a store
Of herbs collected, nor this while was e'er
Abandoned by the paynim cavalier.

When herbs enow by them in many a beat,
With or without their roots, collected were,
At a late hour, the twain to their retreat
Betook them; and, throughout night's remnant, there
That paragon of continence did heat
What simples she had culled, with mickle care,
While to those mysteries and her every deed
The pagan, present still, gave curious heed;

Who, wearing out the weary night in sport,
—He and those followers that with him remained—
Had suffered thirst in such a grievous sort,
From the fierce fire in that small cave contained,
That drinking round, in measure full or short,
Of Grecian wine two barrels they had drained;
A booty which those squires who serve the Moor
From travelers seized a day or two before.

To Argier's warlike King, unused to wine
(Cursed, and forbidden by his law, esteemed)
The liquor, tasted once, appeared divine,
Sweeter than nectar or than manna seemed.
He, quaffing largely, now of Ishmael's line
The sober use deserving censure deemed.
So fast their cups with that good wine they fill
Each reveler's head is whirling like a mill.

Meanwhile that lady from the fire does lift
The pot, wherein she cooked those herbs, and cries
To Rodomont: "In proof I not adrift
Have launched the words I spake, in random guise,
By that which can the truth from falsehood sift,
Experience, which can make the foolish wise,
Even now the thing shall to thyself be shown,
Not on another's body, but my own.

"I first will trial make," that lady said,
"Of this choice liquor with rare virtue blest;
Lest haply thou shouldst harbor any dread
That mortal poison from these herbs be prest.
With this will I anoint myself, from head
Downward below the naked neck and breast.
Then prove on me thy falchion and thine arm,
And prove if one can smite, the other harm."

She washed, as said, and gladly did decline
Her neck to that unthinking pagan's brand;
Unthinking, and perhaps o'ercome by wine,
Which neither helm, nor mail, nor shield withstand.
That brutish man believed her, and, in sign
Of faith, so struck with cruel steel and hand,
That her fair head, erewhile Love's place of rest,
He severed from the snowy neck and breast.

This made three bounds, and thence in accents clear
Was heard a voice that spake Zerbino's name,
To follow whom, escaping Sarza's peer,
So rare a way was taken by the dame.
Spirit that nobly didst esteem more dear
Thy plighted faith, and chaste and holy name
(Things hardly known, and foreign to our time)
Than thine own life and thine own blooming prime!

Depart in peace, O spirit blest and fair!
So had my verses power, as evermore
I would assay, with all that happy care
Which so adorns and points poetic lore,
And as renowned should be thy story rare,
Thousands and thousands of long years and more!
Depart in peace to radiant realms above,
And leave to earth the example of thy love.

That placated, or in some sort content,
The sainted soul of Isabel might be:
That, if to death that damsel he had shent,
He might at least revive her memory,
Now, Rodomont, to compass his intent,
Would turn into a tomb that church, where he
Inhabited, and where she buried lies;
To you shall be related in what wise.

In all parts round about this chosen site,
For love or fear, he master-masons found;
And, making full six thousand men unite,
Stript of their heavy stones the mountains round.
And raised a fabric ninety yards in height,
From its extremest summit to the ground;
And he within its walls the church enclosed;
Wherein entombed the lovers twain reposed.

This nearly imitates that pile beside
Old Tiber's stream, by Adrian built; and nigh
The sepulcher will he a tower provide,
Wherein he purposes some time to lie.
A narrow bridge, and only two yards wide,
He flung across the stream that rolled fast by.
Long, but so scanty is that bridge, with pain
The narrow pass two coursers can contain;

Two coursers, that abreast have thither made,
Or else, encountering, on that causeway meet:
Nor anywhere was ledge or barricade,
To stay the horse's fall that lost his feet.
He wills that bridge's toll be dearly paid
By Christian or by Moor, who pass his seat;
For with a thousand trophies, arms, and vest,
That damsel's tomb is destined to be drest.

It chanced Orlando, in his furious mood,
Came thither where that foaming river ran;
Where Rodomont beside the mighty flood
Was hurrying on his work; nor yet were done
The tower and tomb, the bridge, scarce finished, stood
Here—save his casque was open—Ulien's son
Steeled cap-à-pie, stood ready armed for fight,
When to the bridge approached Anglantes' knight.

Orlando running thus his wild career,
The barrier tops, and o'er the bridge would fly,
But sullen Rodomont, with troubled cheer,
Afoot, as he that tower is standing nigh,
For he disdains to brandish sword or spear,
Shouts to him from afar with threatening cry,
"Halt! thou intrusive churl and indiscreet,
Rash, meddling, saucy villain, stay thy feet!

"Only for lord and cavalier was made,
And not for thee, dull slave, that bridge was meant."
To this no heed insane Orlando paid,
But, fixed upon his purpose, forward went.
"This madman must I school," the paynim said,
And was approaching with the fell intent
Him into that deep river to despatch,
Not deeming in such foe to find his match.

This while, a gentle damsel sought the place
And toward that bridge across the river rode,
Richly arrayed and beautiful of face,
Who sage reserve in her demeanor showed.
'Tis she that, of her Brandimart in chase,
(If you remember, sir) through every road
And place her lover seeks in anxious wise,
Excepting Paris, where the warrior lies.

When Flordelice that bridge and tower was near
(So was by name the wandering damsel hight)
Grappling with Roland stood the Sarzan peer,
And would into that river pitch the knight.
She, conversant with Brava's cavalier,
The miserable County knew aright;
A mighty marvel in that dame it raised
To see him rove a naked man and crazed.

She stopped, the issue of that strife to know,
Wherein those two so puissant warriors vied.
His opposite by might and main to throw
Into the stream each doughty champion tried.
"How can a fool such mighty prowess show?"
Between his teeth, the furious paynim cried.
And, shifting here and there, was seen to strain,
Brimful of pride, and anger, and disdain.

This hand and now that other he puts out,
To take new hold where he his vantage spies;
Now within Roland's legs, and now without,
Locks his right foot or left, in skillful wise;
And thus resembles, in that wrestling bout,
The stupid bear that in his fury tries
The tree, from whence he tumbled, to o'erthrow,
Deeming it sole occasion of his woe.

Roland, whose better wit was lost withal,
I know not where, and who used force alone,
That utmost force, to which this earthly ball
Haply affords few paragons, or none,
Let himself backward in that struggle fall,
Embracing as he stood with Ulien's son.
Together in the foaming stream they sank;
High flashed the wave, and groaned the echoing bank.

Quickly the stream asunder bore the pair.
Roland was naked, and like fish could swim,
Here shot his feet, his arms extended there,
And gained the bank; nor, when upon the brim,
Halted to mark if his adventure were
Achieved with praise or shame. In evil trim,
The pagan, by his arms impeded sore,
With heavier pain and trouble, toiled ashore.

Along the bridge that spanned that foaming tide
Did Flordelice meantime securely pace,
And, having vainly sought on every side
Brandimant's bearing, since nor iron case
Nor vest of his she anywhere espied,
She hoped to find the knight in other place.
But here return we of the Count to tell,
Who left behind him stream, bridge, tower, and cell.

A hundred marvels does the Count, who bends
His steps across the mountain to the plain;
And, seeking long a path, at length descends
Toward the south, upon the land of Spain.
His way along the beach he after wends,
Near Aragon, beside the tumbling main,
And, ever prompted by his frenzy rank,
Will make himself a dwelling on the bank,

Where he somedeal may shun the noontide ray,
With dry and powdery sea-sand covered o'er;
And here, while so employed upon their way
Arrives Angelica with her Medore,
Who, as you have been told in former lay,
Had from the hills descended on that shore.
Within a yard or less approached the fair,
Ere yet she of his presence was aware.

Nigh buried in their sockets are his eyes,
Spare is his visage, and as dry as bone;
Disheveled is his hair in woful wise;
With frightful beard his cheek is overgrown.
No sooner is he seen, than backward flies
Angelica, who, trembling sore, is flown;
She shrieking loud, all trembling and dismayed,
Betakes her to her youthful guide for aid.

When crazed Orlando was of her aware,
To seize the damsel he upsprang in haste;
So pleased the wretched Count her visage fair,
So quickly was his mood inflamed; effaced
In him all ancient recollections are,
How she by him was whilom served and graced.
Behind her speeds the Count and hunts that dame,
As questing dog pursues the sylvan game.

The youth that sees him chase his love who fled,
His courser spurs, and in pursuit is gone.
With naked falchion after him he sped,
And cut and thrust at Roland as he run,
He from his shoulders hoped to cleave his head,
But found the madman's skin as hard as bone;
Yea, harder far than steel, nor to be harmed;
So good Orlando at his birth was charmed.

When on his back Orlando felt him beat,
He turned, and falling on his youthful foe,
Smote with clenched fist and force that nought can meet—
Smote on his horse's head a fearful blow;
And, with skull smashed like glass, that courser fleet
Was by the madman's furious stroke laid low.
In the same breath Orlando turned anew,
And chased the damsel that before him flew.

At speed Angelica impelled her mare,
And whipped and spurred her evermore; whom slow
She would esteem, albeit that palfrey were
Yet faster than a shaft dismissed from bow.
Her ring she thought upon, and this the fair
Placed in her mouth; nor failed its virtue now;
For putting it between her lips, like light
Extinguished by a puff, she passed from sight.

Was it through fear, or was she, while she stript
This from her finger, shaken in her seat,
Or was it rather, that her palfrey tript,
(For neither this nor that I surely weet),
Angelica, while 'twixt her lips she slipt
The virtuous ring, and hid her visage sweet,
Her stirrups lost; and, tumbling from the sell,
Reversed upon the sand that lady fell.

If but two inches short had fallen his prey,
Upon her would have pounced Orlando near,
Who would have crushed her in his furious way,
But that kind Fortune saved her from the peer.
Let her by other theft herself purvey
With other palfrey, as she did whilere;
For never will she have this courser more,
Which, chased by swift Orlando, scours the shore.

To say so many things I am intent,
I mean not to pursue the cavalier.
To Mandricardo my fair argument
It now behoves me, in his turn to veer
He happily enjoyed his rival spent,
The beauty, left in Europe without peer;
Since fair Angelica from hence had wended,
And virtuous Isabel to heaven ascended.

King Mandricardo, proud that in his right
His lady had adjudged the amorous suit,
Enjoys not her award with full delight;
Since others with him other points dispute.
By young Rogero claimed, that eagle white
Of one disastrous quarrel is the root;
Another moves the King of Sericana
Against the Tartar King, for Durindana.

Agramant and Marsilius strive in vain,
In peace and concord to unite anew,
With labor sore this tangle to undo;
Nor only cannot they persuade the twain
But cannot make the valiant childe refrain
From claiming Hector's buckler as his due;
Nor yet Gradasso move the sword to lend,
Till this, or till that, quarrel have an end.

Rogero brooks not that in other fight
His shield be braced, nor will Gradasso bear
That save against himself the Tartar knight
Should wield the sword Orlando used to wear.
"See we, in fine, on whom the chance will light,"
Cries Agramant, "and further words forbear.
How fortune rules the matter let us see,
And choose him that of her shall chosen be.

"And—would ye do what most would me delight,
And be an obligation evermore—
You shall by casting lots decide your right,
Premising he whose lot is drawn before
The other shall upon two quarrels fight;
So he who wins, on his companion's score
Shall win as well as on his own; and who
Loses the battle lose alike for two.

"Between Rogero and Gradasso, we
Deem there is little difference, rather none:
And wot whichever shall elected be,
In arms will make his martial prowess known.
As for the rest, let doubtful victory
Descend on him whom Heaven is pleased to own!
Upon the vanquished knight no blame shall fall,
But we to Fortune will impute it all."

Rogero and Gradasso, at this say
Of Agramant, stood silent, and agreed
That he whose lot first issued the assay
Should undertake for both in listed mead.
Thus in two scrolls, inscribed in the same way,
Their names are writ as destined to succeed.
These afterward are cast into an urn,
Which much they shake and topsy-turvy turn.

A seely boy then dipt his hand and drew
A billet from the vase, and it befel
Thereon Rogero's name the assistants knew—
Gradasso's left behind. I cannot tell
How joyed renowned Rogero at the view,
And can as little say what sorrow fell
Upon Gradasso, on the other side;
But he perforce his fortune must abide.

The foolish rabble anxiously attends
Those goodly champions' contest for the prize,
A crowd that neither sees nor comprehends
Other than that which is before its eyes.
But they who know what boots and what offends,
—Marsilius and Sobrino, and the wise—
Censure the fight and monarch that affords
A field of combat to those martial lords.

Nor, what a heavy loss he would sustain
(Cease they to royal Agramant to read)
Were Mandricardo or Rogero slain;
A thing by cruel Destiny decreed.
Since they, to combat against Charlemagne,
Of one of these alone have greater need
Than of ten thousand more, amid which crew
They scarce would find one champion good and true.

And more than King, than all, who sought in vain
To soften Agrican's infuriate son,
The beauteous daughter of King Stordilane
Lamented, and besought him, woe-begone,
Besought him he would do what all would fain
Behold by the relenting warrior done;
Lamented her, as through the cavalier
For ever kept in agony and fear.

"If of small value life to you appear,
And you esteem a painted bird more high,
At least for my life's sake esteem yours dear;
For one without the other shall not die.
With you to die excites in me no fear;
With you, prepared for life or death am I;
Yet would I fain not die so ill content,
As I should die if you before me went."

Accompanying words with tears and sighs,
In such, or such like speech she him did pray,
Throughout that livelong night, in piteous wise,
Hoping her lover's anger to allay;
And Mandricardo, sucking from her eyes
Those sweet tears, glittering in their humid ray,
And that sweet moan, from lips more deeply dyed
Than crimson rose, himself in tears, replied:

"Alack! my dearest life! take thou no dread,
Alack! for love of Heaven! of thing so light;
For if (to my sole harm) with banners spread,
Their following of the Frank or paynim rite
King Agramant and Charles united led,
This need not cause you matter for affright.
What poor account you make of me is clear
If this one, sole, Rogero breeds such fear.

The bugle's sound is by the Tartar heard,
Which the proud warrior to the strife defies.
No more of treaty will he hear a word;
From bed upspringing, "Arms!" the monarch cries,
And shows a visage with such fury stirred,
Doralice dares no longer peace advise,
Nor speak of treaty or of truce anew;
And now perforce the battle must ensue.

The Tartar arms himself in haste; with pain
The wonted service of his squires he tarries;
This done, he springs upon the steed amain,
Erewhile the champion's who defended Paris;
And him with speed toward the listed plain,
Fixt for that fierce assay, the courser carries.
Even then the King and barons thither made,
So that the strife was little time delayed.

From this side and from that, the eagle flew,
Which Jove in air was wonted to sustain;
So hurtled, but with plumes of different hue,
Those others often on Thessalian plain.
The beamy lances, rested by the two,
Well warranted the warriors' might and main,
And worse than that encounter had withstood;
So towers resist the wind, so rocks the flood.

As Turpin truly writes, into the sky
Upwent the splinters, broke in the career;
For two or three fell flaming from on high,
Which had ascended to the starry sphere.
The knights unsheathed their falchions from the thigh,
And, like those who were little moved by fear,
For new encounter wheeled, and, man to man,
Pointing at one another's vizor ran.

They, pointing at the vizors' sight, attacked,
Nor with their falchions at the steeds took aim,
Each other to unhorse, unseemly act!
Since in that quarrel they are nought to blame.
Those err, nor know the usage, who by pact
Deem they were bound their horses not to maim:
Without pact made, 'twas reckoned a misdeed
And an eternal blot to smite a steed.

But yet no stroke well worthy of their might
Those peers have dealt, so cautious are the twain.
The Tartar's falchion was the first to bite,
By which was good Rogero well nigh slain.
By one of those fell blows which either knight
So well could plant, his shield was cleft in twain;
Beneath, his cuirass opened to the stroke,
And to the quick the cruel weapon broke.

The assistants' hearts were frozen at the blow,
So did Rogero's danger them appall,
On whom the many's favor, well they know,
And wishes rest, if not of one and all.
And then (had Fortune ordered matters so,
As the most part desired they should befall)
Taken had been the Tartar king or slain;
So had that blow offended all the train.

I think that blow was by some angel stayed,
To save Rogero from the mischief near:
Yet at the King (nor answer he delayed)
He dealt a stroke more terrible than e'er.
At Mandricardo's head he aims his blade,
But such the fury of the cavalier,
And such his haste, he less my blame deserves,
If slanting from the mark his falchion swerves.

Had Balisarda smote him full, though crowned
With Hector's helm, the enchantment had been vain.
So reels the Tartar, by that stroke astound,
He from the bridle-hand lets go the rein.
Thrice with his head he threats to smite the ground
While his unguided courser scours the plain;
That Brigliadoro, whom by name you know,
Still, for his change of master, full of woe.

Poised in his stirrups stood the Tartar lord,
And aiming at his foeman's casque, believed
He with the stroke of his descending sword
Rogero to the bosom should have cleaved;
But from that youth, yet quicker in his ward,
A wound beneath his arm the King received,
Which made wide daylight in the stubborn mail
That clothed the better armpit with its scale.

Rogero drawing Balisarda back,
Out sprang the tepid blood of crimson stain;
Hence Mandricardo's arm did vigor lack,
And with less dint descended Durindane:
Yet on the crup the stripling tumbled back,
Closing his eyelids, through excess of pain
And memorable aye had been that blow,
Had a worse helmet clothed the warrior's brow.

For this he pauses not, but spurs amain,
And Mandricardo smites in the right side.
Here little boots the texture of the chain,
And the well welded metal's temper tried
Against that sword, which never falls in vain,
Which was enchanted to no end beside,
But that against it nothing should avail,
Enchanted corselet or enchanted mail.

Whate'er that sword takes in it shears outright,
And in the Tartar's side inflicts a wound.
He curses Heaven and raves in such despite,
Less horribly the boisterous billows sound.
He now prepares to put forth all his might;
The shield, with argent bird and azure ground,
He hurls, with rage transported, from his hand,
And grasps with right and left his trenchant brand.

"Marry," Rogero cried, "it needs no more
To prove your title to that ensign vain,
Which now you cast away. and cleft before;
Nor can you more your right in it maintain."
So saying, he perforce must prove how sore
The danger and the dint of Durindane;
Which smites his front, and with such weight withal,
A mountain lighter than that sword would fall.

It cleft his vizor through the midst; 'twas well
That from the sight diverged the trenchant blade,
Which on the saddle's plated pommel fell;
Nor yet its double steel the falchion stayed.
It reached his armor (like soft wax, the shell
Oped, and the skirts wherewith 'twas overlaid)
And trenched upon his thigh a grievous wound;
So that 'twas long ere he again waxed sound.

The spouting blood of either cavalier
Their arms had crimsoned in a double drain;
Hence diversly the people guessed which peer
Would have the better of the warlike twain:
But soon Rogero made the matter clear
With that keen sword, so many a champion's bane:
With this he at that part in fury past
Whence Mandricardo had his buckler cast.

He the left side of his good cuirass gored,
And found a passage to the heart below;
Which a full palm above the flank he bored;
So that perforce the Tartar must forego
His every title to the famous sword,
The blazoned buckler, and its bird of snow,
And yield, together with these seeds of strife,
—Dearer than sword and shield—his precious life.

Not unavenged the unhappy monarch dies;
For in the very moment he is smit,
The sword, for little period his, he plies,
And good Rogero's vizor would have split,
But that he stopped the stroke in wary wise,
And broke its force and vigor ere it lit;
Its force and vigor broke, for he, below
The better arm, first smote his Tartar foe.

Smit was the childe by Mandricardo's hand,
At the same moment he that monarch slew.
He, albeit thick, divides an iron band
And good steel cap beneath it; inches two,
Lies buried in the head the trenchant brand,
The solid bone and sinew severed through.
Astound Rogero fell, on earth reversed,
And from his head a stream of life-blood burst.

Rogero was the first that went to ground,
And so much longer did the King delay,
Nigh every one of those that waited round
Weened he the prize and vaunt had borne away.
So erred his Doralice. that oft was drowned
In tears, and often clad in smiles that day:
She thanked her God, with hands to Heaven extended,
That in such wise the fearful fight had ended.

But when by tokens manifest appear
The live man living and the dead man slain,
The favorers of those knights, with change of cheer,
Some weep and some rejoice, an altered train.
King, lord, and every worthiest cavalier
Crowd round Rogero, who has risen with pain.
Him to embrace and gratulate they wend,
And do him grace and honor without end.

Each with Rogero is rejoiced, and feels
That which he utters in his heart; among
The crowd the Sericane alone conceals
Other than what he vouches with his tongue.
He pleasure in his countenance reveals,
With envy at the conquest inly stung;
And—were his destiny or chance to blame—
Curses whiche'er produced Rogero's name.

What of Rogero's favor can be said?
What of caresses, many, true, and kind,
From Agramant? that not without his aid
Would have unrolled his ensigns to the wind;
Who had to move from Africk been afraid,
Nor would have trusted in his host combined.
He, now King Mandricardo is no more.
Esteems him the united world before.

Nor to Rogero lean the men alone;
To him incline as well the female train,
Who for the land of France had left their own,
Amid the troops of Africk or of Spain;
And Doralice, herself, although she moan
And for her lover, cold and pale, complain,
Save by the griding curb of shame represt,
Her voice, perchance. had added to the rest.

Bradamant's torment have I to recount,
While for the courier damsel she did stay.
With tidings of her love to Alban's Mount
To her Hippalca measured back her way.
She of Frontino first and Rodomont,
And next of good Rogero had to say;
How to the fount anew he had addrest
His way, with Richardetto and the rest,

Rogero's word was pledged for his return
When fifteen days or twenty were gone by;
So had he after to Hippalca sworn,
Bidding her boldly on his faith rely.
"From accidents that chance at every turn,"
Cried Bradamant, "what warranty have I,
Alas!—and such are commonest in war—
That none the knight's return for ever bar?"

The comfort that Hippalca's words convey,
And Hope, companion of the loving train.
Bradamant's fear and sorrow so allay,
That she enjoys some respite from her pain:
This moves her in Mount Alban's keep to stay;
Nor ever thence that lady stirred again
Until the day, that day the youthful knight
Had fixt, who ill observed his promise plight.

But in that he his promise ill-maintained,
No blame upon Rogero should be cast;
Him one or other cause so long detained.
The appointed time perforce the overpast;
On a sick bed, long time, he, sorely pained,
Was laid, wherein a month or more he past
In doubt of death; so deeply him had gored
Erewhile in fight the Tartar monarch's sword.

Him on the day prefixed the maid attended,
Nor other tidings of the youth had read,
But those he through Hippalca had commended,
And that which after Richardetto said;
Who told, how him Rogero had defended,
And freed the captive pair to prison led.
The tidings, overjoyed, she hears repeat;
Yet blended with some bitter is the sweet.

For she had heard as well in that discourse,
For might and beauty voiced, Marphisa's praise;
Heard how Rogero thither bends his course,
Together with that lady, as he says,
Where in weak post and with unequal force
King Agramant the Christian army stays.
Such fair companionship the lady lauds,
But neither likes that union nor applauds.

Nor light suspicion has she of that Queen;
For were Marphisa beauteous, as was said,
And they together till that time had been,
'T were marvel but Rogero loved the maid,
Yet would she not believe; but hung between
Her hopes and fears, and in Mount Alban stayed,
And close the anxious there, until the day
Which was to bring her joy or sorrow, lay.

Hither had good Rinaldo now repaired;
Because returning Paris-ward again,
From Brava whither had he often fared,
As said to seek Angelica in vain)
He of that pair those evil news had heard
His Malagigi and his Viviane,
How they were to Maganza to be sent;
And hence to Agrismont his way had bent.

His course to Mont Albano has he ta'en;
And, there embracing wife and children dear,
Mother and brethren and the cousins twain
(They who were captives to their foe whilere),
A parent swallow seems, amid that train,
Which, with full beak, its fasting young doth cheer
With them a day or more the warrior stayed,
Then issued forth and others thence conveyed.

CANTO XXIII

I speak not of what fatal mischief wrought
Hippalca's and the brother's bitter blow;
I speak of fell and cruel tidings brought
Some few days after; for the former woe,
Weighed with this other, was a thing of nought:
This after some digression will I show.
But first Rinaldo's feats I must declare,
Who with his troop to Paris made repair.

The following day they met a cavalier,
Toward evening, with a lady by his side,
Sable his shield, and sable was his gear,
Whose ground a bar of silver did divide.
As foremost, and of seeming force, the peer
Young Richardetto to the joust defied;
He prompt for battle, wheeled his courser round.
And for the tourney took sufficient ground.

Between those knights no further parley past;
Without more question charged the martial two.
Rinaldo with the friendly troop stood fast,
And looked to see what issue would ensue.
"Him from his saddle will I quickly cast,
If firm the footing, and mine arm prove true,"
Within himself young Richardetto cries;
But that encounter ends in other wise

Him underneath the vizor's sight offends
The stranger champion, of the sable weed,
With force so fell, that he the youth extends
Above two lances' length beyond his steed.
Quickly to venge the knight Alardo wends,
But falls himself astounded on the mead;
Sore handled, and unhorsed by such a stroke,
His buckler in the cruel shock is broke.

His lance Guichardo leveled, when he spied
Outstretched upon the field the brethren two;
Although "Halt, halt," renowned Rinaldo cried,
"For this third course to me is justly due"
But he as yet his helmet had not tied,
So that Guichardo to the combat flew.
He kept his seat no better than the twain;
Forthwith, like them, extended on the plain.

All to be foremost in the joust contend,
Richardo, Malagigi, Viviane;
But to their strife Rinaldo puts an end;
He shows himself in arms before the train,
Saying, "'Tis time that we to Paris wend;
For us too long the tourney will detain,
If I expect till each his course has run,
And ye are all unseated. one by one."

So spake the knight, yet spake not in a tone
To be o'erheard in what he inly said;
Who thus foul scorn would to the rest have done.
Both now had wheeled, and fierce encounter made.
In the career Rinaldo was not thrown,
Who all the banded kinsmen much outweighed;
Their spears like brittle glass to pieces went,
But not an inch the champion's backward bent.

The chargers such a rough encounter made,
That on his crupper sank each staggering horse.
Rinaldo's rose so quick, he might be said
Sarcely to interrupt his rapid course;
The stranger's broke his spine and shoulder-blade,
That other shocked him with such desperate force.
When his lord sees him slain, he leaves his seat,
And in an instant springs upon his feet;

And to his foe, that having wheeled anew,
Approached with hand unarmed, the warrior cried:
"Sir, to the goodly courser whom ye slew,
Because, whenas he lived, he was my pride,
I deem I ill should render honor due,
If thus unvenged by my good arm he died;
And so fall on, and do as best ye may,
For we perforce must meet in new assay."

To him Rinaldo: "If we for thy horse
Have to contend in fight, and nought beside,
Take comfort, for I ween that with no worse
Thou, in his place, by me shalt be supplied,"
"Thou errest if thou deem'st his loss the source
Of my regret," the stranger knight replied;
"But I, since thou divinest not my speech,
To thee my meaning will more plainly teach.

"I should esteem it were a foul misdeed,
Unless I proved thee also with the brand.
I, if thou in this other dance succeed
Better or worse than me, would understand:
Then, as it please, afoot or on thy steed,
Attack me, so it be with arms in hand.
I am content all vantage to afford;
Such my desire to try thee with the sword!"

Not long Rinaldo paused; he cried: "I plight
My promise not to balk thee of the fray,
And, for I deem thou art a valiant knight,
And lest thou umbrage take at mine array,
These shall go on before, nor other wight,
Beside a page, to hold my horse, shall stay."
So spake Mount Alban's lord; and to his band,
To wend their way the warrior gave command.

To that kind paladin with praise replied
The stranger peer; alighting on the plain,
Rinaldo to the valet, at his side,
Consigned the goodly steed Bayardo's rein,
And when his banner he no longer spied,
Now widely distant with the warrior's train,
His buckler braced, his biting falchion drew.
And to the field defied the knight anew.

And now each other they in fight assail.
Was never seen a fellier strife in show.
Neither believes his foeman can avail
Long, in that fierce debate, against his blow;
But when they knew, well weighed in doubtful scale,
That they were fitly matched, for weal or woe,
They laid their fury and their pride apart,
And for their vantage practised every art.

One hour and more than half another, stood
The knights in battle; and the golden sun
Already was beneath the tumbling flood,
And the horizon veiled with darkness dun;
Nor yet had they reposed, nor interlude
Had been, since that despiteous fight begun,
'Twixt these, whom neither ire nor rancor warms,
But simple thirst of fame excites to arms.

He of Mount Alban is the first to say,
They should not combat darkling, on the plain:
But should their duel till such time delay
As slow Arcturus should have turned his wain.
And adds, as safely as himself might stay
The foe in his pavilion, of his train
As duly tended, honored, and well seen,
As he in any place had ever been.

To pray him has Rinaldo little need:
He courteously accepts him for his host:
And thither the united warriors speed,
Where lies Mount Alban's troop in chosen post.
From his attendant squire a goodly steed,
With sumptuous housings gorgeously embossed,
Rinaldo takes, with tempered sword and spear,
And these bestows upon the cavalier.

Guido the savage was that cavalier,
Who, with Marphisa leagued, the martial maid,
Sansonet, and the sons of Olivier,
Long sailed the sea, as I erewhile have said;
From earlier meeting with his kindred dear
By Pinabel, the felon knight, delayed;
Seized by that traitor, and by him detained,
To enforce the wicked law he had ordained.

Sir Guido, when he knew his host to be
Rinaldo, famed above each famous knight,
Whom he had burned with more desire to see
Than ever blind man covets the lost light,
In rapture cries, "What fortune tempted me
With you, my lord, to strive in deadly fight,
Whom long I have beloved, and love, whose worth
I prize above all dwellers upon earth?

"Me on the distant bank of Euxine's flood
(I Guido am yclept) Constantia bare,
Conceived of the illustrious seed and good
Of generous Aymon, as ye likewise are.
To visit you and my bold brotherhood
Is the occasion hither I repair;
And, where to honor you I had in thought,
I see my coming has but mischief wrought."

While neither they through talk their journey stay,
Neither through speed abate their talk, those two
Reached the pavilions where the kinsmen lay:
There good Rinaldo, crying to his crew,
That this was Guido, whom so many a day
They had impatiently desired to view,
Much pleased the friendly troop; and, at his sight,
All like his father deemed the stranger knight.

So one day and another prick the train,
That they to Paris' leaguered gates are nigh,
Scarce ten miles distant, on the banks of Seine;
When, as good Fortune wills it, they descry
Gryphon and Aquilant, the two that stain
Their virtuous armor with a different dye;
Sable was Aquilant's, white Gryphon's weed;
Good Oliver's and Sigismonda's seed.

In parley were they by a damsel stayed,
Nor she of mean condition to behold,
That in a snowy samyte was arrayed,
The vesture edged about with list of gold;
Graceful and fair, although she was dismayed,
And down her visage tears of sorrow rolled;
Who with such mien and act her speech enforced,
It seemed of some high matter she discoursed.

When she, that gentle damsel, now more near,
Beholds renowned Rinaldo, him she knows,
Acquainted with each paladin and peer.
She news which sorely grieve the warrior shows;
And thus begins: "My lord, your cousin dear,
To whom its safety Church and Empire owes,
Roland, erewhile so honored and so sage,
Now roves the world, possest with frantic rage.

"Few days are past, since I in shameful wise
Saw Roland, running naked in his mood,
Sending forth piteous shrieks and fearful cries;
In fine, that he is frantic, I conclude;
Nor this had I believed, save with these eyes
That strange and cruel wonder I had viewed."
She added next, how from the bridge's top,
Embraced by Rodomont, she saw him drop.

"To whosoe'er I deem not Roland's foe
I tell my tale," pursued the dame again,
"That, of the crowd who hear this cruel woe,
Some one, in pity to his cruel pain,
May strive the peer in Paris to bestow,
Or other friendly place, to purge his brain.
Well wot I, if such tidings he receive,
Nought unattempted Brandimart will leave."

Fair Flordelice was she, the stranger dame,
Than his own self to Brandimart more dear,
Who in pursuit of him to Paris came.
That damsel, after, tells the cavalier,
How hate and strife were blown into a flame
Between Gradasso and the Tartar peer,
For Roland's falchion; fierce Gradasso's prey
When slain in combat Mandricardo lay.

Rinaldo drew his squadron out, and there,
Ambushed, he made them lie the daylight through;
But when the sun, leaving this nether air
In darkness, to his ancient nurse withdrew;
And fangless serpent now, and goat, and bear,
With other beasts, adorned the heavens anew,
Which by the greater blaze had been concealed,
Rinaldo moved his silent troop afield.

A mile an-end with Aquilant he prest,
Gryphon, Alardo, and Vivian of his race,
Guido and Sansonetto, and the rest,
Without word spoken, and with stealthy pace.
The Moorish guard they find with sleep opprest;
They slaughter all, nor grant one paynim grace;
And, ere they were by others seen or heard,
Into their midmost camp the squadron spurred.

At the first charge on that unchristened band,
Their guard and sentries, taken by surprise,
So broken are by good Rinaldo's brand,
No wight is left, save he who slaughtered lies.
Their first post forced, the paynims understand
No laughing matter is the lord's emprize:
For sleeping and dismayed, their naked swarms
Make small resistance to such warriors' arms.

To strike more dread into the Moorish foe,
Mount Alban's champion, leading the assault,
Bade beat his drums and bade his bugles blow,
And with loud echoing cries his name exalt.
He spurs Bayardo that is nothing slow;
He clears the lofty barriers at a vault,
Trampling down foot, o'erturning cavalier,
And scatters booth and tent in his career.

Seven hundred men with good Rinaldo speed,
Drawn from Mount Alban and the townships nigh
—No fiercer erst obeyed Achilles' lead—
Inured to summer and to winter sky:
So stout each warrior is, so good at need,
A hundred would not from a thousand fly;
And, better than some famous cavaliers,
Many amid that squadron couch their spears.

Them now in succor of King Charles he stirred,
And left with little guard his citadel.
Among the Africans that squadron spurred,
That squadron, of whose doughty feats I tell,
Doing by them what wolf on woolly herd
Does where Gelesus' limpid waters well,
Or lion by the bearded goat and rank,
That feeds on Cinyphus's barbarous bank.

Tidings to Charles, Rinaldo had conveyed,
That he for Paris with his squadron steers,
To assail, by night, the paynims ill purveyed;
And ready and in arms the King appears.
He, when his help is needed, comes in aid,
With all his peerage, and, beside his peers,
Brings Monodantes' son, amid that crew,
Of Flordelice the lover chaste and true,

Whom by such long and by such tedious way
She sought throughout the realm of France in vain;
Here by the cognizance, his old display,
Afar, by her distinguished from the train.
At the first sight of her he quits the fray
And wears a semblance loving and humane.
He clipt her round with many a fond caress,
And kissed a thousand times, or little less.

Brandimart, who the County loves as dear
As man can love a brother, friend, or son,
Disposed to seek Orlando, far and near,
Nor pain nor peril in the adventure shun,
Till something for the comfort of that peer
By wizard's or by leech's art be done,
Armed as he is, leaps lightly on his steed,
And takes his way beneath the lady's lead.

Thitherward where Orlando she had spied,
In company the knight and lady made.
They daily post till to that bridge they ride,
Which Argier's king maintained, in arms arrayed.
To him the guard their coming signified;
Courser and arms his squires as well conveyed;
And Brandimart no sooner is at hand
Than Rodomont is armed and at his stand.

With lofty voice the sovereign of Argier,
Assorting with his moody rage, 'gan say:
"Whoe'er thou art, sir knight, and whencesoe'er,
Brought by mistake of purpose or of way,
Light from thine horse and doff thy warlike gear,
To deck this sepulcher ere thee I slay,
An offering to its lovely tenant's spirit;
And thou in thy forced homage have no merit."

Brandimart, at the paynim's proud discourse,
His weapon in the rest, for answer, laid;
He good Batoldo spurred, his gentle horse,
And at the champion with such fury made
As showed that he, for courage and for force,
With any warrior in the world had weighed.
King Rodomont as well, with rested spear,
Thundered along the bridge, in fierce career.

With heavy spears, the growth of forest hoar,
Saplings rough-hewn, those masters of the just,
Upon the perilous bridge encountering sore,
Exchange, on either side, no gentle thrust,
Nor much their mighty strength or manège-lore
Avails the steeds; for, prostrate in the dust,
Crumbles each knight and charger in mid-course;
Whelmed in one fate the rider and his horse.

When either steed would nimbly spring from ground,
As the spur galled and gored his bleeding flank,
He on that little bridge no footing found;
For all too narrow was the scanty plank.
Hence both fall headlong, and the deafening sound
Re-echo vaulted skies and grassy bank.
So rang our stream, when from the heavenly sphere
Was hurled the sun's ill-fated charioteer.

With all their weight, down hurtled from the steep,
Coursers and cavaliers, who sate them well;
And dived into the river's darksome deep,
To search for beauteous nymph in secret cell.
Nor this the first nor yet the second leap
Which from the bridge had made that infidel
Who, often floundering in its oozy bed,
Well in the soundings of that stream was read.

He where 'tis hard and where 'tis softer knows,
Where shallow is the water, where profound;
With breast and flanks above the waves he rose,
And Brandimart assailed on safer ground.
Brandimart, whirling with the current, goes,
While his steed's feet the faithless bottom pound.
He, with his lord, stands rooted in the mud,
With risk to both of drowning in the flood.

Whelming them upside-down, the waters flow,
And plunge them in the river's deepest bed;
The horse is uppermost, the knight below.
From the bridge looks his lady, sore bestead,
And tear employs, and prayer, and supplicant vow:
"Ah, Rodomont! for love of her, whom dead
Ye worship, do not deed of such despite!
Permit not, sir, the death of such a knight."

Moved by her words, he lent her lover aid,
So by his courser in the stream immersed;
Who, to his peril sore, was overlaid,
And largely drank, albeit with little thirst.
But Rodomont a while his help delayed,
And seized the warrior's sword and helmet first.
Him half exhausted from the stream he drew,
And prisoned with that other captive crew.

For many days the damsel vainly strayed,
Ere she encountered any one that bore
Semblance of knight that might afford her aid,
And free her prisoned lover from the Moor;
After she long and fruitless search had made,
At length a warrior crossed her way that wore
A richly ornamented vest, whose ground
With trunks of cypresses was broidered round.

King Agramant in his pavilion lies,
From his first sleep awakened by a knight;
He that the King will be a prisoner cries
Save he with speed betake himself to flight;
The monarch looks about him and espies
His paynim bands dispersed in panic fright.
Naked, they far and near desert the field;
Nay, never halt to snatch the covering shield.

Uncounseled and confused, the King arrayed
His naked limbs in knightly plate and chain,
When thither Falsiron, the Spaniard, made
Grandonio, Balugantes, and their train:
They to the Moorish King the risk displayed
Of being taken in that press, or slain;
And vouched, if thence he should in safety fare,
He well might thank propitious Fortune's care.

Agramant to those lords' opinion bent,
Though that hard counsel he could ill endure;
As if supplied with wings, towards Arles he went
By roads that offered passage most secure.
Besides safe guides, much favored his intent
His setting out when all things were obscure.
Scaping the toils by good Rinaldo spread,
Some twenty thousand of the paynims fled.

AGREEMENT TO THOSE LORDS' OPINION BENT,
THOUGH THAT HARD COUNSEL HE COULD ILL ENDURE

From an Engraving by Cesare Fiori

AGRAMANT TO THOSE LORDS' OPINION BENT,
THOUGH THAT HARD COUNSEL HE COULD ILL ENDURE

From an Engraving by Gustave Doré

Their King forgets not, how Rogero lay
Sore wounded, and as yet in evil case.
Him, with what care they could, he made convey
From that dread field, on horse of easy pace.
Borne to the sea by the securest way,
They in a bark the suffering warrior place,
And thence commodiously to Arles transport;
Whither their wasted squadrons make resort.

Chased by Rinaldo and King Charlemagne,
A hundred thousand, or well nigh, I ween,
By wood, by mountain, valley, and by plain,
Flying the fury of the Franks are seen;
More find the passage blocked and widely stain
With crimson what before was white and green.
Not so Gradasso's puissant troop was spent,
Who farther from the field had pitched his tent.

Now that Gradasso learns Mount Alban's peer
Is he that storms the camp, in huge delight
Armed, on Alfana leaps the cavalier,
And through the pitchy darkness seeks the knight,
O'erturning all that cross his fierce career,
He leaves afflicted and in piteous plight
The broken bands of Afric and of France,
All food alike for his wide-wasting lance.

He seeks the paladin, now here, now there,
Echoing his name as loud as he can shout;
And thitherward inclines his courser, where
The bodies are most thickly strewn about.
At length encounter, sword to sword, the pair,
For broken are alike their lances stout;
Which shivering in their hands, had flown upright,
And smote the starry chariot of the night.

When King Gradasso recognized the foe,
Not by the blazoned bearing of his shield,
But by Bayardo, by that horrid blow,
Which made him seem sole champion of the field,
He to reproach the knight was nothing slow,
And of unworthy action him appealed;
In that he had not kept his ground and day,
Erewhile appointed for the fierce assay.

Guido the savage, as he spake, was nigh
With Richardetto; and the warlike twain
Brandished alike their trenchant swords on high,
To teach more wit to him of Sericane:
But them Rinaldo stopped with sudden cry,
Nor brooked that he should injury sustain.
"Am I too weak," he cried, "without your aid,
To answer him that dares my deeds upbraid?"

"Gradasso, I beseech thee, that before
The battle be, thou fully comprehend
My just excuses, that thou may'st no more
Me for my failure strongly reprehend.
Next for Bayardo, as agreed of yore,
'Tis my desire that we afoot contend;
Even as ordained by thee, in desert place,
Alone in knightly duel, face to face."

The King of Sericane, as loth to leave
The second quarrel for the former breach,
Though doubtful how that tale he should receive,
Takes in good part the bold Rinaldo's speech.
Not, as upon former battle's eve,
They choose their ground on Barcelona's beach;
But on the morn ensuing, and, fast by
A neighboring fountain, will the question try.

Thither Rinaldo will the steed convey,
There to be placed in common, 'twixt the two.
If good Gradasso take his foe or slay,
He wins Bayardo without more ado.
But if Gradasso fails in that affray,
Should he be slain, or else for mercy sue,
A prisoner to Mount Alban's valiant lord,
Rinaldo shall possess the virtuous sword.

When they were so agreed, Gradasso made
Thither where, camped apart, his servants lay,
Albeit warmly by Rinaldo prayed,
He would with him in his pavilion stay.
The paynim King in armor was arrayed,
And so the paladin, by break of day;
And to the destined fount came either lord,
The field of combat for the horse and sword.

CANTO XXIV

Now it behoves, ere more of these be said,
I should awhile of Agramant discourse,
Who had from that night's raging fire conveyed
To Arles the remnant of his scattered force;
Since to unite his troops, and furnish aid
And victual, 'twas a place of much resouroe,
Seated upon a river, nigh the shore,
With Spain in front and Africa before.

With horse and foot, of good or evil sort,
Marsilius throughout Spain their loss repairs;
And each armed bark in Barcelona's port,
Furnished through love or fear, for sea prepares.
The Moor to council daily calls his court;
Nor care nor cost the watchful monarch spares.
Meanwhile sore taxes and repeated cess,
All Africa's o'erburdened towns oppress.

He offers Rodomont, if to his side
He will return, but offers him in vain,
Renowned Almontes' daughter as a bride;
His cousin she, her portion Oran's reign.
He lures not from his bridge that knight of pride,
Who has so many sells, such plate and chain
Collected there, from cavaliers o'erthrown,
As serve to hide the monumental stone,

Marphisa would not such a course pursue;
Nay, the redoubted damsel hearing said
That Agramant, subdued by Charles's crew,
His choicest warriors taken, chased, or dead,
In Arles was sheltered with his broken few,
Thither, unbidden by the monarch, sped,
Prompt to assist him with her friendly blade,
And proffered purse and person in his aid.

This while does good duke Aymon's daughter mourn,
Because those twenty days so slowly trail.
Which term elapsed, Rogero should return,
And be received into her church's pale.
Time halts not more with him to foreign bourne
Exiled, with prisoner pent in noisome jail;
Pines the poor wretch for liberty and light,
Or his loved land, desired and gladsome sight.

Aye sick with hope deferred, the expecting maid
That Phœbus' steeds were foundered onewhile deemed;
Then that his wheels were out of frame, so stayed
Beyond the wonted term his chariot seemed.
Still longer than that day when Faith delayed
The sun, which on the righteous Hebrew beamed,
Or than that night Alcides was conceived,
She every day and every night believed.

When, saving some four days, the term was ended,
Appointed for the youthful warrior's stay,
She, full of hope, the messenger attended
From hour to hour, that should arrive, and say,
"Behold Rogero comes!" and oft ascended
A turret, from whose top she might survey
Gay champaign, wood, and, mid the wide expanse,
A portion of the road that led to France.

The period so prefixt o'erpast by one,
By two, three, six, by eight, by twenty days,
She seeing not her spouse, and tidings none
Receiving of the youth, laments 'gan raise,
Which had from snake-haired Furies pity won,
In those dark realms that Rhadamanthus sways.
She smote her eyes divine and bosom fair;
She rent the tresses of her golden hair.

"Can it be true?" she cried. "Shall I be fain
To follow one that strives to hide and fly?
Esteem a man that has me in disdain?
Pray him that never hears my supplicant cry?
Suffer who hates me o'er my heart to reign?
One that his lofty virtues holds so high,
'Twere need some heaven-born goddess should descend
From realms above his stubborn heart to bend?"

For a month's space beyond those twenty days
This hope affords fair Bradamant content.
Hence sorrow not on her so heavy weighs
As it would else her harassed soul have shent.
She one day that along the road she strays,
By which she oft to meet Rogero went,
Hears tidings, that of Hope—last comfort left—
Like every other good, her breast bereft.

Bound homeward from the hostile camp, where lay
King Agramant, she met a Gascon knight,
A prisoner to those paynims, from the day
That fought nigh Paris was the famous fight.
The damsel pressed him all he knew to say;
Then to the point she covets led the knight;
Asks of Rogero, on that theme abides,
Listens to that, nor aught inquires besides.

Of him a full account did he afford,
As well acquainted with the court; he said,
How, matched with Mandricardo strove that lord,
And laid the martial King in combat dead.
And how, sore wounded by the Tartar's sword,
Above a month the stripling kept his bed.
And had the stranger here but closed his news,
Well might his tale the missing knight excuse.

But then subjoins the Gascon cavalier,
How in the Moorish camp a damsel lies,
By name Marphisa hight, of beauteous cheer,
Bold and as skilled in arms of every guise,
Who loves Rogero and to him is dear;
And them the host so rarely sundered spies
That every one, throughout the paynim train,
Deems that betrothed in wedlock are the twain;

And hope, when healed shall be the youthful knight,
The marriage of those lovers will succeed;
For sure, with pleasure and sincere delight,
Those tidings paynim prince and monarch read;
Since, knowing either's superhuman might,
They augur, from their loins will spring a breed,
In little season, which shall pass in worth
The mightiest race that ever was on earth.

What he rehearsed, the Gascon knight believed,
Nor without cause believed the news he bore,
A rumor universally received
And bruited through the squadrons of the Moor;
Who had that notion of their love conceived
From signs of kindness witnessed evermore.
For, good or bad, though from one mouth it flows,
Fame to a boundless torrent quickly grows.

That she with him had brought the paynim aid,
And ne'er was seen without the cavalier,
The first foundation of the rumor laid;
But what confirmed that fame in every ear,
Was, that she, having from the camp conveyed
The thief Brunello (as I sang whilere)
As if alone to see Rogero brought,
Had to the camp returned, uncalled, unsought,

She solely to the camp had ta'en her way,
To visit him that on a sick-bed smarted;
Nor once alone; but often all the day
There passed that maid, and but at eve departed;
Who gave yet greater cause of her to say,
That, known as one so haughty and hard-hearted,
Who all the world despised, she now was grown
Benign and humble to the childe alone.

When Bradamant the Gascon's story heard,
That lady suffered such tormenting pain,
Such cruel woe her inmost bosom stirred,
From falling she preserved herself with pain.
She turned her courser round, without a word,
Inflamed with jealousy and fierce disdain;
From her all hope the wretched damsel spurns,
And to her chamber, breathing wrath, returns.

Turned on her face, her body on the bed,
Armed as she is, the grieving damsel throws,
And that the sad lament by sorrow bred
May be unheard of any, bites the clothes;
And so, repeating what the stranger said,
To such a pitch her smothered anguish grows,
Her plaints no longer able to restrain,
So vents the maid perforce her piteous pain.

"Thou hast left me, Rogero; thee to leave,
Alas! I neither will nor power possess.
But will and power have I my life to reave,
To 'scape from this o'erwhelming wretchedness.
To die at strife with thee alone I grieve;
For, had the gods so pleased my lot to bless,
As to require my life, when loved of thee,
Never so welcome had been death to me."

Resolved to die, 'twas so the damsel cried;
And starting from her bed, by passion warmed,
To her left breast her naked sword applied;
Then recollected she was wholly armed.
Meanwhile her better Spirit, at her side,
With these persuasive words her fury charmed:
"O lady, born to such illustrious name!
Would'st thou conclude thy life with such foul shame?

"Were it not better to the field to go,
Where aye thy breath with glory may be spent?
There, should Rogero chance to lay thee low,
He to have slain thee haply may repent;
But, should his falchion deal the mortal blow,
What death could ever yield thee more content?
Reason it were thou should'st by him be slain,
Who dooms thee living to such passing pain.

"Haply of that Marphisa, too, before
Thou die, thou yet may'st deadly vengeance take,
Who with dishonest love and treacherous lore
Did thy beloved Rogero's fealty shake."
This seemed to please the mournful lady more
Than her first thought; and she forthwith bade make
A mantle for her arms, which should imply
Her desperation and desire to die.

She took the courser that was wont to bear
Astolpho, and with him the lance of gold,
By whose sole touch unhorsed all champions were.
Needless anew I deem it to unfold
Why by Astolpho given, and when and where,
Or how that spear obtained the warrior bold.
The lady took the lance, but nothing guessed
Of the stupendous virtue it possessed.

Without attendants, without squire, alone,
The hill descending by the nearest way,
Toward Paris is the mournful damsel gone,
Where camped erewhile the Moorish forces lay;
For still to her the tidings were unknown,
That good Rinaldo and his bold array
Had raised, with Charles' and Maligigi's aid,
The siege the paynims had to Paris laid.

Cadurci and Cahors city left behind,
Bradamant sees the mountain, far and near,
Whence Dordogne's waters to the valley wind;
And Montferrant's and Clermont's towers appear:
When she, a lady fair, of semblance kind,
Beholds, by that same road, toward her steer.
Three knights were nigh, and, at the pommel hung,
A buckler from the damsel's saddle swung.

Before the lady and behind her ride
More squires and maids, a numerous company.
Fair Bradamant of one that passed beside
Demanded, who the stranger dame might be?
"That lady to the King of France," replied
The squire, "is sent upon an embassy
From the lost isle, which lies mid seas that roll
Their restless waves beyond the northern pole.

"Some the lost isle, some Iceland call the reign
Whereof a royal lady fills the throne;
Whose charms (before those charms all beauties wane)
Are such as Heaven has dealt to her alone.
The shield you see she sends to Charlemagne,
But with the pact and purpose plainly shown,
He should confer it on the knight whose worth
Is, in his judgment, fairest upon earth.

"She, as she deems herself (and it is true,
She is the fairest of all womankind),
A cavalier, that should in heart and thew
Surpass all other warriors, fain would find,
Resolved, should her a hundred thousand woo,
None shall unfix the purpose of her mind;
But he, held worthiest by the world's accord,
Alone shall be her lover and her lord.

"In France, in royal Charles's famous court,
The damsel hopes to find the cavalier,
Who in a thousand feats of high report
Has shown that he excels each puissant peer.
All three are monarchs who the dame escort,
And what their kingdoms ye as well shall hear.
One Sweden rules, one Gothland, Norway one;
Surpassed in martial praise by few or none.

"These three, whose kingdoms at some distance lie,
Yet the least distant lie from the lost isle,
(Because few mariners its shore descry,
As little known, that island so they style),
Wooed and still woo her for a wife, and vie
In valor, and, to win the lady's smile,
Illustrious deeds have done, which Fame shall sound
While Heaven shall circle in its wonted round.

"Yet she nor these will wed, nor cavalier
That does not, as she deems, all else excel.
'Lightly I hold your proofs of valor here,'
Those northern monarchs was she wont to tell,
'And if, like sun amid the stars, one peer
Outshines his fellows, him I honor well;
But therefore hold him not, in fierce alarms,
Of living men the bravest knight in arms.

"'To Charlemagne, whom I esteem and hold
As wisest among reigning kings, by me
Shall be despatched a costly shield of gold,
On pact and on condition, that it be
Bestowed on him deemed boldest of the bold
Amid the martial ranks of chivalry.
Serves he King Charlemagne or other lord,
I will be governed by that King's award.

"'If when King Charles the buckler shall receive
And give to one so stout, that best among
All others he that warrior shall believe,
Do they to his or other court belong,
For me the golden buckler shall retrieve
One of you three, in his own virtue strong;
My every love and thought shall he possess;
Him for my spouse and lord will I confess.'

"Moved by these stirring speeches, hither hie
From that wide-distant sea, those monarchs bold,
Resolved to win the buckler, or to die
Beneath his hand who has that shield of gold."
Bradamant ponders much the squire's reply.
He gives his horse the head—his story told—
And plies him so with restless heel and hand,
He overtakes the damsel's distant band.

After him gallops not, nor hurries aught,
Bradamant, who pursues her road at ease;
Much evermore revolving in her thought
Things that may chance, she finally foresees
That through the buckler by that damsel brought
Will follow strife and boundless enmities,
Amid King Charles's peerage and the rest,
If with that shield he shall reward the best.

To better speed fair Bradamant aroused
Her courser, yet but little way did ride,
When with his flock, which on the champaign browsed,
Leaving the fields, a shepherd she espied.
To him where, well or ill, she might be housed,
With many instances the maid applied,
For never house could such ill shelter yield,
But that in rain 'twere worse to lodge afield.

To her the shepherd said: "I know of none
Whereto I could direct you, near at hand.
At least six leagues are distant all, but one,
Named Tristram's tower throughout the neighboring land.
But not to all men is the door undone;
For it behoves that they, with lance in hand,
Achieve their footing first, and then defend,
Who to be lodged within its walls pretend.

"If there be room within, to stranger knight
The castellan gives kindly welcome there;
But is a lodging claimed by other wight,
To joust with all new comers makes him swear.
If none, he need not move; but arm and fight
He must what stranger thither shall repair;
And he that worst his warlike arms shall ply,
Must wander forth beneath the naked sky.

"As well, if wife or maid seek that repair,
(Is she alone, is she accompanied),
And afterward another, the most fair
Is housed; that other must without abide."
Bradamant asked the kindly shepherd where
That castle stood; and he with signs replied
As well as words, and pointed with his hand
Where, five or six miles wide, the tower did stand.

Though Rabican's good paces merit praise,
To hurry him the damsel has no skill,
By those so passing foul and broken ways,
(By season somewhat rainy rendered ill)
So as to reach the tower ere Night o'erlays
The world, whose every nook dark shadows fill.
Arrived, that lady finds the portal barred,
And that she seeks a lodging, tells the guard.

He answers, that the place is occupied
By dame and knight already housed, who, met
About the fire, in that chill evening tide,
Wait till their supper he before them set.
To him that maid: "The board is not supplied,
I deem, for them, unless the meal be eat.
Now, say I wait their coming," she pursues,
"Who know and will observe your castle's use."

The guard his message bore, where at their ease
Reposed the weary cavaliers; his tale
Not overlikely was those kings to please;
For cold and peevish blew the wintry gale,
And now fast fell the rain; yet, forced to seize
Their arms, they slowly don the martial mail.
The rest remain within; while they proceed
Against the damsel, but with little speed.

Three cavaliers they were, of might so tried,
Few champions but to them in prowess yield—
The same that she that very day, beside
The courier maid, encountered in the field,
They that in Iceland boasted, in their pride,
To bear away from France the golden shield,
Who (for they had the martial maid outrode)
Arrived before her at that lord's abode.

In feats of arms few warriors were more stout;
But she be sure will be among those few,
She, that on no account will wait without,
Fasting and wet, night's weary watches through.
Within from window and from lodge, the rout
Look forth, and will the joust by moonlight view,
Which streams from underneath a covering cloud;
Albeit the furious rain beats fast and loud.

When she beheld how, of the drawbridge clear,
Those knights together or scarce sundered came,
She took her ground; and next in fierce career,
With flowing bridle, drove the furious dame,
Leveling against those kings that virtuous spear,
Her cousin's gift, which never missed its aim;
Whose touch each warrior must unseat perforce;
Yea Mars, should Mars contend in mortal course.

The King of Sweden, foremost of those knights,
In falling too is foremost of the train;
With such surpassing force his helmet smites
That spear, which never yet was couched in vain.
Gothland's good King next meets the maid, and lights
With feet in air, at distance on the plain.
The third, unhorsed by Aymon's beauteous daughter,
Half buried lies in mire and marshy water.

When at three strokes she has unhorsed them all,
Lighting with head on earth and heels in air,
Retiring from the field, she sought the Hall,
In search of lodging; but, ere harbored there,
To issue forth, at whosoever's call,
Is, by the warder's hest, obliged to swear.
That lord who well had weighed her famous feats
The damsel with surpassing honor greets.

As Bradamant disarms, and first her shield,
And after puts her polished casque away,
A caul of shining gold, wherein concealed
And clustering close, her prisoned tresses lay,
She with the helmet doffs; and now revealed,
While the long locks about her shoulders play,
A lovely damsel by that band is seen,
No fiercer in affray than fair of mien.

Already so well-grown and widely spread
Were the bright tresses that the hermit shore,
These, gathered in a knot, behind her head,
Though shorter than their wont, the damsel wore:
And he, that castle's master, plainly read,
Who often had beheld her face before,
That this was Bradamant; and now he paid
Still higher honors to the martial maid.

In the great hall the plenteous board was laid
(None fairer was in all the world beside).
Then came he where those beauteous ladies stayed,
And them, with torches lit, did thither guide.
On entering, Bradamant, the room surveyed,
And she, that other fair, on every side;
Who as they gaze about the gorgeous hall,
Filled full of picture, mark each storied wall.

The guests were placed, and now about to eat,
When suddenly bethought that castellan,
To house two damsels were a thing unmeet:
One lady must dislodge, and one remain;
The fairest stay, and she least fair retreat,
Where howls the wind, where beats the pattering rain.
Because they separate came, 'tis ordered so;
One lady must remain, one lady go.

The lord some matrons of his household crew
Calls, with two elders, in such judgments wise;
He marks the dames, and bids them of the two
Declare which is most beauteous in their eyes;
And all, upon examination due,
Cry, Aymon's daughter best deserves the prize,
And vouch as she in might those kings outweighed,
No less in beauty she surpassed the maid.

The warder cries to the Icelandic dame,
Who of her sentence has a shrewd suspicion,
"O lady, let it be no cause of blame,
That we observe our usage and condition;
To seek some other rest must be thine aim,
Since, by our universal band's admission,
Though unadorned that martial maid be seen,
Thou canst not match her charms and lovely mien."

The maid turns pale, and all her color flies,
Who dreads so stern a sentence to obey;
But generous Bradamant, in prudent guise,
Who could not bear to see her turned away,
Cried to that baron: "Partial and unwise
Your judgment seems, as well all judgments may,
Wherein the losing party has not room
To plead, before the judge pronounces doom.

"I, who this cause take on me to defend,
Say (whether fairer or less fair I be)
I came not as a woman, nor intend
That now mine actions shall be womanly.
But, saving I undress, who shall pretend
To say I am or am not such as she?
Neither should aught be said but what we know,
And least of all what works another woe.

"Many, as well as I, long tresses wear,
Yet are not therefore women; if, as guest,
I have admittance gained to your repair,
Like woman or like man, is manifest.
Then why should I the name of woman bear,
That in my actions stand a man confest?
'Tis ruled that woman should a woman chase;
Not that a knight a woman should displace.

"Grant we (what I confess not howsoe'er)
That you the woman in my visage read,
But that in beauty I am not her peer;
Not therefore, deem I, of my valor's meed
Ye would deprive me, though in beauteous cheer
The palm I to that damsel should concede.
'Twere hard, because I yield to her in charms,
That I should forfeit what I won in arms.

"And if it be your usage that the dame
Who yields in beauty from your tower must wend,
Here to remain I my design proclaim,
Should my resolve have good or evil end.
Hence I infer, unequal were the game,
If she and I in beauty should contend:
For if such strife 'twixt her and me ensues,
Nought can the damsel gain, and much may lose;

"And save the gain and loss well balanced be
In every match, the contest is unfair.
So that by right, no less than courtesy,
May she a shelter claim in your repair.
But are there any here that disagree,
And to impugn my equal sentence dare,
Behold me prompt, at such gainsayer's will,
To prove my judgment right, his judgment ill!"

Bradamant—grieved that maid of gentle kind
Should from that castle wrongfully be sped,
To bide the raging of the rain and wind,
Where sheltering house was none, nor even shed—
With reasons good, in wary speech combined,
Persuades that lord; but mostly what she said
On ending, silences the knight; and he
Allows the justice of that damsel's plea.

The supper done—brought sooner to a close
  Haply from their desire to feast their eyes—
First of the set, Duke Aymon's daughter rose,
  And next the courier maid is seen to rise.
With that the warder signs to one, that goes
  And many torches fires in nimble wise;
Whose light on storied wall and ceiling fell.
What followed shall another canto tell

CANTO XXV

When with the pictures they their sight had fed,
  And talked long while—those ladies and the rest—
They to their chambers by that lord were led,
  Wont much to worship every worthy guest.
Already all were sleeping, when her bed
  At last Duke Aymon's beauteous daughter prest.
She here, she there, her restless body throws,
Now right, now left, but vainly seeks repose:

Yet slumbers toward dawn, and in a dream
  The form of her Rogero seems to view.
The vision cries: "Why vex yourself, and deem
  Things real which are hollow and untrue?
Backward shall sooner flow the mountain-stream
  Than I to other turn my thought from you.
When you I love not, then unloved by me
This heart, these apples of mine eyes, will be.

"Hither have I repaired," it seemed he said,
  "To be baptized and do as I professed.
If I have lingered, I have been delayed,
  By other wounds than that of Love opprest."
With that he vanished from the martial maid,
  And with the vision broken was her rest.
New floods of tears the awakened damsel shed,
And to herself in this sad fashion said:

"What pleased was but a dream; alas! a sheer
  Reality is this my waking bane;
My joy a dream and prompt to disappear,
  No dream my cruel and tormenting pain.
Ah! wherefore what I seemed to see and hear,
  Cannot I, waking, see and hear again?
What ails ye, wretched eyes, that closed ye show
Unreal good, and open but on woe?"

The clouds were gone, the horizon overspread
With glowing crimson by the new-born sun,
And in these signs, unlike the past was read
A better promise of the day begun;
When Bradamant upstarted from her bed,
And armed her for the journey to be done,
Her thanks first rendered to the courteous lord
For his kind cheer and hospitable board.

And found the lady messenger, with maid
And squire, had issued from the castled hold,
And was a-field, where her arrival stayed
Those three good warriors, those the damsel bold
The eve before had on the champaign laid,
Cast from their horses by her lance of gold;
And who had suffered, to their mighty pain,
All night, the freezing wind and pattering rain.

Add to such ill that hungering sore for food
They and their horses through the livelong night
Trampling the mire with chattering teeth had stood;
But (what well-nigh engendered more despite
—Say not well-nigh—more moved the warrior's mood)
Was that they knew the damsel would recite
How they had been unhorsed by hostile lance
In the first course that they had run in France;

And—each resolved to die or else his name
Forthwith in new encounter to retrieve—
That Ulany, the message-bearing dame
(Whose style no longer I unmentioned leave),
A fairer notion of their kingly fame
Than heretofore, might haply now conceive,
Bold Bradamant anew to fight defied,
When of the drawbridge clear they her descried;

Not thinking, howsoe'er, she was a maid,
Who in no look or act the maid confest.
Duke Aymon's daughter, loth to be delayed,
Refuses, as a traveler that is pressed,
But they so often and so sorely prayed,
That she could ill refuse the King's request.
Her lance she levels, at three strokes extends
All three on earth, and thus the warfare ends.

For Bradamant no more her courser wheeled,
But turned her back upon the foes o'erthrown.
They that, intent to gain the golden shield,
Had sought a land so distant from their own,
Rising in sullen silence from the field
(For speech with all their hardihood was gone)
Appeared as stupefied by their surprise,
Nor to Ulany dared to lift their eyes.

For they, as thither they their course addrest,
Had vaunted to the maid in boasting vein,
No paladin or knight with lance in rest,
Against the worst his saddle could maintain.
To make them vail yet more their haughty crest,
And look upon the world with less disdain,
She tells them, by no paladin or peer
Were they unhorsed, but by a woman's spear.

"Now what of Roland's and Rinaldo's might,
Not without reason held in such renown,
Ought you to think," she said, "when thus in fight
Ye by a female hand are overthrown?
Say, if the buckler one of these requite,
Better than by a woman ye have done
Will ye by those redoubted warriors do?
So think not I, nor haply think so you.

"This may suffice you all; and need is none
A clearer proof of prowess to display;
And who desires, if rashly any one
Desires, again his valor to assay,
Would add but scathe to shame, now made his own;
Now; and the same to-day as yesterday.
Unless perchance he thinks it praise and gain,
By such illustrious warriors to be slain."

When they by Ulany were certified
A woman's hand had caused their overthrow,
Who with a deeper black than pitch had dyed
Their honor, heretofore so fair of show,
And more than ten her story testified,
Where one sufficed, with such o'erwhelming woe
Were they possessed, they with such fury burned,
They well nigh on themselves their weapons turned.

What arms they had upon them they unbound,
And cast them, stung by rage and fury sore,
Into the moat that girt the castle round,
Nor even kept the falchions that they wore;
And, since a woman them had cast to ground,
O'erwhelmed with rage and shame, the warriors swore,
Themselves of such a crying shame to clear,
They, without bearing arms, would pass a year;

And that they evermore afoot would fare
Up hill or down, by mountain or by plain,
Nor, when the year was ended, would they wear
The knightly mail or climb the steed again;
Save that from other they by force should bear,
In battle, other steeds and other chain.
So, without arms, to punish their misdeeds,
These wend a-foot, those others on their steeds.

But so I will not on that story dwell,
As not to seek anew the valiant twain:
Who, by consent, beside a lonely well,
Had tied their goodly coursers by the rein.
I of their war to you some day will tell,
A war not waged for empire or domain,
But that the best should buckle to his side
Good Durindana, and Bayardo ride.

No signal they, no trumpet they attend,
To blow them to the lists, no master who
Should teach them when to foin and when to fend,
Or wake their sleeping wrath; their swords they drew,
Then, one against the other, boldly wend,
With lifted blades, the quick, and dext'rous two.
Already 'gan the champions' fury heat,
And fast and hard their swords were heard to beat.

With mickle industry, with mighty pain
And art, Rinaldo, shifting here and there,
Avoids the deadly dint of Durindane,
Well knowing how 'tis wont to cleave and tear.
Gradasso struck with greater might and main,
But well nigh all his strokes were spent in air;
Or, if he sometimes smote, he smote on part
Where Durindana wrought less harm than smart.

Rinaldo with more skill his blade inclined,
And stunned the arm of Sericana's lord,
Him oft he reached where casque and coat confined,
And often raked his haunches with the sword:
But adamantine was the corslet's rind,
Nor link the restless falchion broke or bored.
If so impassive was the paynim's scale,
Know, charmed by magic was the stubborn mail.

Without reposing they long time had been,
Upon their deadly battle so intent,
That, save on one another's troubled mien,
Their angry eyes the warriors had not bent.
When such despiteous war and deadly spleen,
Diverted by another strife, were spent.
Hearing a mighty noise, both champions turn,
And good Bayardo, sore bested, discern.

They good Bayardo by a monster view—
A bird, and bigger than that courser—prest.
Above three yards in length appeared to view
The monster's beak; a bat in all the rest.
Equipped with feathers, black as ink in hue,
And piercing talons was the winged pest;
An eye of fire it had, a cruel look,
And, like ship-sails, two spreading pinions shook.

Quickly the steed, possessed of mickle might,
Breaks loose, and, in his fury and despair,
Against the monster strives with kick and bite;
But swiftly he retires and soars in air,
And thence returning, prompt to wheel and smite,
Circles and beats the courser, here and there.
Wholly unskilled in fence, and sore bested,
Bayardo swiftly from the monster fled.

Bayardo to the neighboring forest flies,
Seeking the closest shade and thickest spray;
Above the feathered monster flaps, with eyes
Intent to mark where widest is the way.
But that good horse the greenwood threads, and lies
At last within a grot, concealed from day.
When the winged beast has lost Bayardo's traces,
He soars aloft, and other quarry chases.

Rinaldo and Gradasso, who descried
Bayardo's flight, the conqueror's destined meed,
The battle to suspend, on either side,
Till they regained the goodly horse, agreed,
Saved from that fowl which chased him, far and wide;
Conditioning, whichever found the steed,
With him anew should to that fountain wend,
Beside whose brim their battle they should end.

Rinaldo ceased in little time to spy
Bayardo's traces, who strange course had run;
And made for thorny thicket, wet or dry,
Tree, rock, or river, with design to shun
Those cruel claws, which, pouncing from the sky
To him such outrage and such scathe had done.
Rinaldo, after labor vain and sore,
To await him at the fount returned once more;

In case, as erst concerted by the twain,
The King should thither with the steed resort;
But having sought him there with little gain,
Fared to his camp afoot, with piteous port.
Return we now to him of Sericane,
He that had sped withal in other sort,
Who, not by judgment guided to his prey,
But his rare fortune, heard Bayardo neigh;

And found him shrouded in his caverned lair,
So sore moreover by his fright opprest,
He feared to issue into open air.
Thus of that horse himself the King possest.
Well he remembered their conditions were
To bring him to the fount; but little pressed
Now was that knight to keep the promise made,
And thus within himself in secret said:

"Win him who will, in war and strife, I more
Desire in peace to make the steed my own;
From the world's farther side, did I of yore
Wend hitherward, and for this end alone.
Having the courser, he mistakes me sore
That thinks the prize by me will be foregone.
Him would Rinaldo conquer, let him fare
To Ind, as I to France have made repair."

Astolpho in his flight had left Navarre
They who beheld sore wondering at the sight—
Then leaves he Tarragon behind him far,
Upon his left, Biscay upon his right:
Traversed Castile, Galicia, Lisbon, are
Seville and Cordova, with rapid flight;
Nor city on seashore nor inland plain
Is unexplored throughout the realm of Spain.

Beneath him Cadiz and the strait he spied,
Where whilom good Alcides closed the way;
From the Atlantic to the farther side
Of Egypt, bent o'er Africa, to stray;
The famous Balearic isles descried,
And Ivica, that in his passage lay;
Toward Arzilla then he turned the rein,
Above the sea that severs it from Spain.

Astolpho lighted in a spacious court
Intending on the Nubian king to wait.
Less strong than sumptuous is the wealthy fort,
Wherein the royal Æthiop keeps his state,
The chains that serve the drawbridge to support,
The bolts, the bars, the hinges of the gate,
And finally whatever we behold
Here wrought in iron, there is wrought in gold.

High prized withal, albeit it so abound,
Is that best metal; lodges built in air
Which on all sides the wealthy pile surround,
Clear colonnades with crystal shafts upbear.
Of green, white, crimson, blue and yellow ground,
A frieze extends below those galleries fair.
Here at due intervals rich gems combine,
And topaz, sapphire, emerald, ruby shine.

In wall and roof and pavement scattered are
Full many a pearl, full many a costly stone.
Here thrives the balm; the plants were ever rare,
Compared with these, which were in Jewry grown.
The musk that we possess from thence we bear,
From thence on other shores is amber thrown.
In fine, those products from this clime are brought,
Which in our regions are so prized and sought.

The soldan, king of the Egyptian land,
Pays tribute to this sovereign, as his head,
They say, since having Nile at his command
He may divert the stream to other bed.
Hence, with its district upon either hand,
Forthwith might Cairo lack its daily bread.
Senapus him his Nubian tribes proclaim:
We Priest and Prester John the sovereign name.

Of all those Æthiop monarchs, beyond measure,
The first was this, for riches and for might;
But he, with all his puissance, all his treasure,
Alas! had miserably lost his sight.
And yet was this the monarch's least displeasure,
Vexed by a direr and a worse despite;
Harassed, though richest of those Nubian kings,
By a perpetual hunger's cruel stings.

Whene'er to eat or drink the wretched man
Prepared by that resistless need pursued,
Forthwith—infernal and avenging clan—
Appeared the monstrous harpies' craving brood;
Which, armed with beak and talons, overran
Vessel and board, and preyed upon the food;
And what their stomachs deign not to receive,
Foul and defiled the loathsome monsters leave.

And this: because upborne by such a tide
Of full-blown honors, in his unripe age,
For he excelled in heart and nerve, beside
The riches of his loyal heritage,
Like Lucifer, the monarch waxed in pride,
And war upon his Maker thought to wage.
He with his host against the mountain went,
Where Egypt's mighty river finds a vent.

Upon this hill, which well nigh kissed the skies,
Piercing the clouds, the King had heard recite,
Was seated the terrestrial paradise,
Where our first parents flourished in delight.
With camels, elephants, and footmen hies
Thither that King, confiding in his might;
With huge desire if peopled be the land
To bring its nations under his command.

God marred the rash emprize, and from on high
Sent down an angel, whose destroying sword
A hundred thousand of that chivalry
Slew, and to endless night condemned their lord.
Emerging, next, from hellish caverns, fly
These horrid harpies, and assault his board;
Which still pollute or waste the royal meat,
Nor leave the monarch aught to drink or eat.

And him had plunged in uttermost despair
  One that to him erewhile had prophesied
The loathsome harpies should his daily fare
  Leave unpolluted only, when astride
Of winged horse, arriving through the air,
  An armed cavalier should be descried.
And, for impossible appears the thing,
Devoid of hope remains the mournful King.

Now that with wonderment his followers spy
  The English cavalier so make his way,
O'er every wall, o'er every turret high,
  Some swiftly to the King the news convey.
Who calls to mind that ancient prophecy,
  And heedless of the staff, his wonted stay,
Through joy, with outstretched arms and tottering feet,
Comes forth, the flying cavalier to meet.

Within the castle court Astolpho flew,
  And there, with spacious wheels, on earth descended:
The King, conducted by his courtly crew,
  Before the warrior knelt, with arms extended,
And cried: "Thou angel sent of God, thou new
  Messiah, if too sore I have offended,
For mercy, yet, bethink thee, 'tis our bent
To sin, and thine to pardon who repent.

"Knowing my sin, I ask not, I to be
  —Such grace I dare not ask—restored to light;
For well I ween such power resides in thee,
  As Being accepted in thy Maker's sight.
Let it suffice, that I no longer see,
  Nor let me with perpetual hunger fight.
At least, expel the harpies' loathsome horde,
Nor let them more pollute my ravaged board;

"And I to build thee, in my royal hold,
  A holy temple, made of marble, swear,
With all its portals and its roof of gold,
  And decked, within and out, with jewels rare.
Here shall thy mighty miracle be told
  In sculpture, and thy name the dome shall bear."
So spake the sightless King of Nubia's reign,
And sought to kiss the stranger's feet in vain.

"Nor angel," good Astolpho made reply,
  "Nor new Messiah, I from heaven descend;
No less a mortal and a sinner I,
  To such high grace unworthy to pretend.
To slay the monsters I all means will try,
  Or drive them from the realm that they offend.
If I shall prosper, be thy praises paid
To God alone, who sent me to thine aid.

Forthwith a solemn banquet they prepare
Within the gorgeous palace of the King.
Seated alone here guest and sovereign are,
And the attendant troop the viands bring.
Behold! a whizzing sound is heard in air,
Which echoes with the beat of savage wing.
Behold! the band of harpies thither flies,
Lured by the scent of victual from the skies.

All bear a female face of pallid dye,
And seven in number are the horrid band;
Emaciate with hunger, lean, and dry;
Fouler than death; the pinions they expand
Ragged, and huge, and shapeless to the eye;
The talon crook'd; rapacious is the hand.
Against the greedy birds, as wrath excites,
Astolpho with his brandished falchion smites.

At croup or collar now he aims his blow,
Now strikes at neck or pinion; but on all,
As if he smote upon a bag of tow,
The strokes without effect and languid fall.
This while nor dish nor goblet they forego;
Nor void those ravening fowls the regal hall,
Till they have feasted full, and left the food
Waste or polluted by their rapine rude.

That King had firmly hoped the cavalier
Would from his seat the royal harpies scare.
He now, that hope foregone, with nought to cheer,
Laments, and sighs, and groans in his despair,
Of his good horn remembers him the peer,
Whose clangors helpful aye in peril are,
And deems his bugle were the fittest mean
To free the monarch from those birds unclean;

And first to fill their ears, to King and train,
With melted wax, Astolpho gives command;
That every one that hears the deafening strain
May not in panic terror fly the land.
He takes the reins, his courser backs again,
Grasps the enchanted bugle in his hand;
And to the sewer signs to have the board
Anew with hospitable victual stored.

The meats he to an open gallery bears,
And other banquet spreads on other ground.
Behold, as wont, the harpy-squad appears;
Astolpho quickly lifts the bugle's round;
And (for unguarded are their harassed ears)
The harpies are not proof against the sound;
In terror from the royal dome they speed,
Nor meat nor aught beside the monsters heed.

After them spurs in haste the valiant peer:
And on the winged courser forth is flown,
Leaving beneath him, in his swift career,
The royal castle and the crowded town;
The bugle ever pealing, far and near
The harpies fly toward the torrid zone;
Nor light until they reach that loftiest mountain
Where springs, if anywhere, Nile's secret fountain.

Almost at that aërial mountain's feet,
Deep under earth, extends a gloomy cell.
The surest pass for him, as they repeat,
That would at any time descend to hell.
Hither the predatory troop retreat,
As a safe refuge from the deafening yell.
As far, and farther than Cocytus' shore
Descending, till that horn is heard no more.

He backs the griffin-horse and soars a flight
Whereby to reach that mountain's top he schemes;
Which little distant, with its haughty height,
From the moon's circle good Astolpho deems;
And, such desire to see it warms the knight,
That he aspires to heaven, nor earth esteems.
Through air so more and more the warrior strains,
That he at last the mountain-summit gains.

Here sapphire, ruby, gold, and topaz glow,
Pearl, jacinth, chrysolite and diamond lie,
Which well might pass for natural flowers that blow,
Catching their color from that kindly sky.
So green the grass! could we have such below,
We should prefer it to our emerald's dye.
As fair the foliage of those pleasant bowers!
Whose trees are ever filled with fruit and flowers.

Warble the wanton birds in verdant brake,
Azure, and red, and yellow, green and white.
The quavering rivulet and quiet lake
In limpid hue surpass the crystal bright.
A breeze, which with one breath appears to shake,
Aye, without fill or fall, the foliage light,
To the quick air such lively motion lends,
That Day's oppressive noon in naught offends;

And this, mid fruit and flower and verdure there,
Evermore stealing divers odors, went;
And made of those mixed sweets a medley rare,
Which filled the spirit with a calm content.
In the mid plain arose a palace fair,
Which seemed as if with living flames it brent.
Such passing splendor and such glorious light
Shot from those walls, beyond all usage bright.

Thither where those transparent walls appear,
Which cover more than thirty miles in measure,
At ease and slowly moved the cavalier,
And viewed the lovely region at his leisure;
And deemed, compared with this, that sad and drear,
And seen by heaven and nature with displeasure,
Was the foul world, wherein we dwell below:
So jocund this, so sweet and fair in show.

An elder, in the shining entrance-hall
Of that glad house, toward Astolpho prest;
Crimson his waistcoat was, and white his pall;
Vermilion seemed the mantle, milk the vest:
White was that ancient's hair, and white withal
The bushy beard descending to his breast;
And from his reverend face such glory beamed,
Of the elect of Paradise he seemed.

He, with glad visage, to the paladine,
Who humbly from his sell had lighted, cries:
"O gentle baron, that by will divine
Have soared to this terrestrial paradise!
Albeit nor you the cause of your design,
Nor you the scope of your desire surmise,
Believe, you not without high mystery steer
Hitherward from your arctic hemisphere.

"We will discourse at better leisure more,
And you what must be done shall after hear;
But you that, through long fast, must hunger sore,
First brace your strength with us, with genial cheer."
Continuing his discourse, that elder hoar
Raised mighty wonder in the cavalier,
When he avouched, as he his name disclosed,
That he the Holy Gospel had composed.

He of our Lord so loved, the blessed John,
Of whom a speech among the brethren went,
He never should see death, and hence the Son
Of God with this rebuke St. Peter shent;
In saying, "What is it to thee, if one
Tarry on earth, till I anew be sent?"
Albeit he said not that he should not die,
That so he meant to say we plain descry.

The holy ancients to a chamber lead,
With welcome kind, the adventurous cavalier;
And in another then his flying steed
Sufficiently with goodly forage cheer.
Astolpho they with fruits of Eden feed,
So rich, that in his judgment 'twould appear,
In some sort might our parents be excused
If, for such fruits, obedience they refused.

Much that not lawfully could here be shown,
Taking him by the hand, to him he read.
"To you, though come from France, may be unknown
What there hath happened," next the apostle said;
"Learn, your Orlando, for he hath foregone
The way wherein he was enjoined to tread,
Is visited of God, that never shends
Him whom he loveth best, when he offends—

"He, your Orlando, at his birth endowed
With sovereign daring and with sovereign might,
On whom, beyond all usage, God bestowed
The grace, that weapon him should vainly smite,
Because he was selected from the crowd
To be defender of his Church's right.
As he elected Samson, called whilere
The Jew against the Philistine to cheer—

"He, your Orlando, for such gifts has made
Unto his heavenly Lord an ill return:
Who left his people, when most needing aid,
Then most abandoned to the heathens' scorn.
Incestuous love for a fair paynim maid
Has blinded so that knight, of grace forlorn,
That twice and more in fell and impious strife
The Count has sought his faithful cousin's life.

"Hence God hath made him mad, and, in this vein,
Belly, and breast, and naked flank expose;
And so diseased and troubled is his brain,
That none, and least himself, the champion knows.
Nebuchadnezzar whilom to such pain
God in his vengeance doomed, as story shows;
Sent, for seven years, of savage fury full,
To feed on grass and hay, like slavering bull.

"But yet, because the Christian paladine
Has sinned against his heavenly Maker less,
He only for three months, by will divine,
Is doomed to cleanse himself of his excess.
Nor yet with other scope did your design
Of wending hither the Redeemer bless,
But that through us the mode you should explore,
Orlando's missing senses to restore.

"'Tis true to journey farther ye will need,
And wholly must you leave this nether sphere;
To the moon's circle you I have to lead,
Of all the planets to our world most near.
Because the medicine that is fit to speed
Insane Orlando's cure is treasured here.
This night will we away, when overhead
Her downward rays the silver moon shall shed."

In talk the blest apostle is diffuse
On this and that, until the day is worn:
But when the sun is sunk i' the salt sea ooze,
And overhead the moon uplifts her horn,
A chariot is prepared, erewhile in use
To scour the heavens, wherein of old was borne
From Jewry's misty mountains to the sky,
Sainted Elias, rapt from mortal eye.

Four goodly coursers next, and redder far
Than flame, to that fair chariot yokes the sire;
Who, when the knight and he well seated are,
Collects the reins; and heavenward they aspire.
In airy circles swiftly rose the car,
And reached the region of eternal fire;
Whose heat the saint by miracle suspends,
While through the parted air the pair ascends.

The chariot, towering, threads the fiery sphere,
And rises thence into the lunar reign.
This, in its larger part they find as clear
As polished steel, when undefiled by stain;
And such it seems, or little less, when near,
As what the limits of our earth contain:
Such as our earth, the last of globes below,
Including seas that round about it flow.

Here doubly waxed the paladin's surprise,
To see that place so large, when viewed at hand;
Resembling but a little hoop in size,
When from the globe surveyed whereon we stand,
And that he both his eyes behoved to strain,
If he would view Earth's circling seas and land;
In that, by reason of the lack of light,
Their images attained to little height.

Here other river, lake, and rich champaign
Are seen, than those which are below descried;
Here other valley, other hill and plain,
With towns and cities of their own supplied;
Which mansions of such mighty size contain,
Such never he before or after spied.
Here spacious holt and lonely forest lay,
Where nymphs forever chased the panting prey.

He that with other scope had thither soared,
Pauses not all these wonders to peruse:
But led by the disciple of our Lord,
His way towards a spacious vale pursues;
A place wherein is wonderfully stored
Whatever on our earth below we lose.
Collected there are all things whatsoe'er,
Lost through time, chance, or our own folly, here.

Nor here alone of realm and wealthy dower,
O'er which aye turns the restless wheel, I say:
I speak of what it is not in the power
Of Fortune to bestow, or take away.
Much fame is here, whereon Time and the Hour,
Like wasting moth, in this our planet prey.
Here countless vows, here prayers unnumbered lie,
Made by us sinful men to God on high.

The lover's tears and sighs; what time in pleasure
And play we here unprofitably spend;
To this, of ignorant men the eternal leisure,
And vain designs, aye frustrate of their end.
Empty desires so far exceed all measure,
They o'er that valley's better part extend.
There wilt thou find, if thou wilt thither post,
Whatever thou on earth beneath hast lost.

He, passing by those heaps, on either hand,
Of this and now of that the meaning sought;
Formed of swollen bladders here a hill did stand,
Whence he heard cries and tumults, as he thought.
These were old crowns of the Assyrian land
And Lydian—as that paladin was taught—
Grecian and Persian, all of ancient fame;
And now, alas! well-nigh without a name.

Golden and silver hooks to sight succeed,
Heaped in a mass, the gifts that courtiers bear—
Hoping thereby to purchase future meed—
To greedy prince and patron; many a snare,
Concealed in garlands, did the warrior heed,
Who heard these signs of adulation were;
And in cicalas, which their lungs had burst,
Saw fulsome lays by venal poets versed.

Loves of unhappy end in imagery
Of gold or jeweled bands he saw exprest;
Then eagles' talons, the authority
With which great lords their delegates invest;
Bellows filled every nook, the fume and fee
Wherein the favorites of kings are blest:
Given to those Ganymedes that have their hour,
And reft, when faded is their vernal flower.

O'erturned, here ruined town and castle lies,
With all their wealth: "The symbols" said his guide,
"Of treaties and of those conspiracies
Which their conductors seemed so ill to hide."
Serpents with female faces, felonies
Of coiners and of robbers, he descried;
Next broken bottles saw of many sorts,
The types of servitude in sorry courts.

He marks a mighty pool of porridge spilled,
And asks what in that symbol should be read,
And hears 'twas charity, by sick men willed
For distribution, after they were dead.
He passed a heap of flowers, that erst distilled
Sweet savors, and now noisome odors shed;
The gift (if it may lawfully be said)
Which Constantine to good Sylvester made.

A large provision, next, of twigs and lime—
Your witcheries, O women!—he explored.
The things he witnessed, to recount in rhyme
Too tedious were; were myriads on record,
To sum the remnant ill should I have time.
'Tis here that all infirmities are stored,
Save only madness, seen not here at all,
Which dwells below, nor leaves this earthly ball.

He turns him back, upon some days and deeds
To look again, which he had lost of yore!
But, save the interpreter the lesson reads,
Would know them not, such different form they wore.
He next saw that which man so little needs,
As it appears—none pray to Heaven for more;
I speak of sense; whereof a lofty mount
Alone surpassed all else that I recount.

It was as 'twere a liquor soft and thin,
If not well corked, would from the vase have drained;
Laid up, and treasured various flasks within,
Larger or lesser, to that use ordained.
That largest was which of the paladin,
Anglantes' lord, the mighty sense contained;
And from those others was discerned, since writ
Upon the vessel was *Orlando's wit.*

The names of those whose wits therein were pent
He thus on all those other flasks espied,
Much of his own, but with more wonderment,
The sense of many others he descried,
Who, he believed, no dram of theirs had spent;
But here, by tokens clear was satisfied,
That scantily therewith were they purveyed;
So large the quantity he here surveyed.

Some waste on love, some seeking honor, lose
Their wits, some, scouring seas, for merchandise,
Some that on wealthy lords their hope repose,
And some befooled by silly sorceries;
These upon pictures, upon jewels those;
These on whatever else they highest prize.
Astrologers' and sophists' wits mid these,
And many a poet's too, Astolpho sees.

Since his consent the apostle signified
Who wrote the obscure Apocalypse, his own
He took, and only to his nose applied,
When (it appeared) it to its place was gone;
And henceforth, has Sir Turpin certified,
That long time sagely lived king Otho's son;
Till other error (as he says) again
Deprived the gentle baron of his brain.

The fullest vessel and of amplest round,
Which held the wit Orlando erst possessed,
Astolpho took; nor this so light he found,
As it appeared, when piled among the rest.
Before, from those bright spheres, now earthward bound,
His course is to our lower orb addressed,
Him to a spacious palace, by whose side
A river ran, conducts his holy guide.

Filled full of fleeces all its chambers were,
Of wool, silk, linen, cotton, in their hue,
Of diverse dyes and colors, foul and fair.
Yarns to her reel from all those fleeces drew,
In the outer porch, a dame of hoary hair.
On summer-day thus village wife we view,
When the new silk is reeled, its filmy twine
Wind from the worm, and soak the slender line.

A second dame replaced the work when done
With other; and one bore it off elsewhere;
A third selected from the fleeces spun,
And mingled by that second, foul from fair.
"What is this labor?" said the peer to John;
And the discipline answered Otho's heir,
"Know that the Parcæ are those ancient wives,
That in this fashion spin your feeble lives."

CANTO XXVI

Henceforth with that apostle let the peer
Remain; for I have now to make a spring
As far as 'tis from heaven to earth; for here
I cannot hang for ever on the wing.
I to the dame return, who was whilere
Wounded by jealousy with cruel sting.
I left her where, successively o'erthrown,
Three kings she quickly upon earth had strown;

And afterward arriving in a town,
At eve, which on the road to Paris lay,
Heard tidings of Rinaldo's victory blown;
And how in Arles the vanquished paynim lay.
Sure her Rogero with the King is gone,
As soon as reappears the dawning day,
Toward fair Provence, whither, as she hears,
King Charlemagne pursues, her way she steers.

She toward Provence, by the nearest road,
So journeying, met a maid of mournful air,
Who, though her cheeks with tears were overflowed,
Was yet of visage and of manners fair.
She was it, so transfixed with Love's keen goad,
Who sighed for Monodante's valiant heir,
Who at the bridge had left her lord a thrall,
When with King Rodomont he tried a fall.

Flordelice marked the maid, that, in her sight,
Appeared a warrior fitted for her needs;
And of the bridge and river 'gan recite,
Where Argier's mighty king the road impedes,
And how he had gone nigh to slay her knight;
Not that more doughty were the monarch's deeds;
But that the wily paynim vantage-ground
In that straight bridge and foaming river found.

"Are you," she said, "so daring and so kind
As kind and daring you appear in show,
Venge me of him that has my lord confined,
And makes me wander thus, oppressed with woe,
For love of Heaven; or teach me where to find
At least a knight who can resist the foe,
And of such skill that little boat shall bring
His bridge and river to the pagan King.

The high-minded maid. to who aye welcome are
All noble quests, by which she worthily
May hope a great and glorious name to bear,
Straight to the paynim's bridge resolves to hie;
And now so much the more, as in despair,
Wends willingly, although it were to die;
In that she, ever with herself at strife,
Deeming Rogero lost, detested life.

"O loving damsel," she made answer, "I
Offer mine aid, for such as 'tis, to do
The hard and dread adventure, passing by
Causes beside that move me, most that you
A matter of your lover testify,
Which I, in sooth, hear warranted of few;
That he is constant; for i' faith I swear,
I well believed all lovers perjured were."

With these last words a sigh that damsel drew,
A sigh that issued from her heart; then said,
"Go we;" and with the following sun those two
At the deep stream arrived and bridge of dread—
Seen of the guard, that on his bugle blew
A warning blast, when strangers thither sped—
The pagan arms him, girds his goodly brand,
And takes upon the bridge his wonted stand;

And as the maid appears in martial scale,
The moody monarch threatens her to slay,
Unless her goodly courser and her mail
As an oblation to the tomb she pay.
Fair Bradamant, who knew the piteous tale,
How murdered by him Isabella lay,
The story gentle Flordelice had taught,
Replied in answer to that paynim haught.

"Wherefore, O brutish man, for your misdeed
Should penance by the innocent be done?
'Tis fitting to appease her you should bleed;
You killed her, and to all the deed is known.
So that, of trophied armor or of weed
Of those so many, by your lance o'erthrown,
Your armor should the best oblation be,
And you the choicest victim slain, by me;

"And dearer shall the gift be from my hand;
Since I a woman am, as she whilere;
Nor save to venge her have I sought this strand;
In this desire alone I hither steer.
But first, 'tis good some pact we understand,
Before we prove our prowess with the spear.
You shall do by me, if o'erthrown, what you
By other prisoners have been wont to do.

"But if, as I believe and trust, you fall,
I will your horse and armor have," she cried,
"And taking down all others from the wall,
Hang on the tomb alone those arms of pride;
And will that you release each warlike thrall."
"The pact is just," King Rodomont replied,
"But those, my prisoners, are not here confined,
And therefore cannot be to you consigned.

"These have I sent into mine Africk reign;
But this I promise thee, and pledge my fay:
If, by strange fortune, thou thy seat maintain,
And I shall be dismounted in the fray,
Delivered, all, shall be the captive train,
Within what time suffices to convey
An order thither, that they out of hand
Should do what thou, if conqueror, may'st command.

"But art thou undermost, as fitter were,
And, as thou surely wilt be, I from thee
Not therefore will thy forfeit armor tear,
Nor shall thy name inscribed, as vanquished, be.
To thy bright face, bright eyes, and beauteous hair,
All breathing love and grace, the victory
Will I resign; let it suffice that thou
Then stoop to love me, as thou hatest now.

"To fall by me thou needest not disdain;
I with such strength, such nerve am fortified."
Somedeal she smiled; but smiled in bitter vein;
Savoring of anger more than aught beside.
She spake not to that haughty man again,
To the bridge-end returned the damsel, plied
Her courser with the rowels, couched her spear,
And rode to meet the furious cavalier.

King Rodomont prepares his course to run;
Comes on at speed; and with such mighty sound
Echoes that bridge, the thundering noise might stun
The ears of many distant from the ground.
The golden lance its wonted work has done;
For that fierce Moor, in tourney so renowned,
This from the saddle lifts, in air suspends,
Then headlong on the narrow bridge extends.

Scarce for her horse the martial damsel can
Find space to pass, when she has thrown h(
And little lacked, and mighty risk she ran
Of falling into that deep stream below:
But, born of wind and flame, good Rabican
So dextrous was, and could so lightly go,
He picked a path along the outer ledge,
And could have paced upon a falchion's edge.

The damsel wheeled, toward the cavalier
Returned, and him bespoke in sportive way;
"Who is the loser now to thee is clear,
And who is undermost in this assay,"
Silent remained the monarch of Argier,
Amazed that woman him on earth should lay.
He cannot, or he will not speak, and lies
On earth, like one astound, in idiot guise.

Silent and sad, he raised himself from ground,
And when he some few paces thence had gone,
His shield unbraced and helm and mail unbound
He flung against the tomb; and thence, alone,
Afoot the moody monarch left that ground;
Yet not till he had given command to one
(Of his four squires was he) to do his best
Relating to those captives, as exprest.

He parts; and save that in a caverned cell
He dwelt, no further news of him were known:
Meanwhile the harness of that infidel
Bradamant hung upon the lofty stone;
And having thence removed all plate and shell
Wherewith (as by the writing it was shown)
The cavaliers of Charles their limbs had drest,
She moved not, nor let other move, the rest.

When she in other writing had displayed
How she had freed that passage from the foe,
To mournful Flordelice the martial maid,
She that still held her weeping visage low,
Turned her, and courteously that lady prayed
To tell her whither she designed to go.
To her afflicted Flordelice replied:
"To Arles, where camp the paynims, would I ride.

"Which bark, I hope, and fitting company,
To carry me to Africk may afford;
Nor will I halt upon my way, till I
Once more rejoin my husband and my lord;
All means and measures there resolved to try,
That may release him from his jailer's ward;
And should the Saracen deceitful prove,
Others, and others yet, I mean to move."

"My company," replied the martial fair,
"For some part of the road I offer thee,
Till we have sight of Arles; then to repair
Thither, will pray you, for the love of me,
To find King Agramant's Rogero there,
Whose glorious name is spread o'er land and sea,
And render to that knight this goodly horse,
Whence the proud Moor was flung in martial course.

"Say thus, from point to point, 'A cavalier
That would in combat prove his chivalry,
And to the world at large would fain make clear
Thy breach of faith with him, that thou may'st be
Ready and well prepared for the career,
Gave me this horse, that I might give it thee.
He bids thee promptly mail and corslet dight,
And wait him, who with thee will wage the fight.'

"Say this and nought beside, and would he hear
My name, declare that 'tis to thee unknown."
With wonted kindness cried that dame, "I ne'er
In spending life itself, not words alone,
Should weary in your service; since whilere
You would in my behalf as much have done."
Her Aymon's daughter thanked in courteous strain,
And to her hand consigned Frontino's rein.

Through long days' journeys, by that river-shore,
Together go the lovely pilgrim pair,
Till they see Arles, and hear the hollow roar
Of billows breaking on the sea-beach bare.
Almost without the suburbs, and before
The furthest barrier, stops the martial fair;
To furnish Flordelice what time might need
For the conveyance of Rogero's steed.

She forward rode, within the enclosure sped,
And o'er the bridge and through the gateway wended,
And (furnished with a guide, who thither led)
To young Rogero's inn; and there descended.
She to the childe as bid, her message said,
And gave the courser, to her care commended;
Then (for she waits not for an answer) speeds
In haste to execute her proper needs.

To Agramant and King Marsilius flew
The news, that one craved battle on the plain.
Serpentine stood by chance before the two,
And gained their leave to don his plate and chain,
And vowed to take that haughty man; the crew
Of people over wall and rampart strain;
Nor child nor elder was there, but he prest
To see which champion should bestir him best.

In beauteous arms and costly surcoat drest,
Serpentine of the star to combat sped;
The ground he at the first encounter prest,
As if equipt with wings, his courser fled.
The damsel flew his charger to arrest,
And by the bridle to that paynim led,
Exclaiming; "Mount, and bid your monarch send
"A knight that better can with me contend."

The Moorish King, that on the rampart's height
Stood, with a mighty following, next the plain,
Marking the joust, much marveled at the sight
Of the foe's courtesy to him of Spain.
"He takes him not, although he may of right,"
He cries i' the hearing of the paynim train.
Serpentine comes, and, as the maid commands,
A better warrior of that King demands.

Grandonio de Volterna, fierce of mood,
And in all Spain the proudest cavalier,
The second for that fell encounter stood,
Such favor had his suit obtained whilere.
"To thee thy courtesy shall do no good,"
He threats, "for if unhorsed in the career,
A prisoner to my lord shalt thou be led;
But, if I fight as wonted, thou art dead."

She cries, "I would not thy discourtesy
Should make me so forget my courteous vein,
But that aforehand I should caution thee
Back to thy fortress to return again,
Ere on hard earth thy bones shall battered be.
Go tell thy King no champion of thy grain
I seek, but hither come to crave the fight
With warrior that is worthy of my might."

Bradamant's sharp and stinging answer stirred
The paynim's fury to a mighty flame;
So that, without the power to speak a word,
He wheeled his courser, filled with rage and shame.
Wheeling as well, at that proud paynim spurred
Her horse with leveled lance the warlike dame.
As the charmed weapon smites Grandonio's shield,
With heels in air, he tumbles on the field.

To him the high-minded damsel gave his horse,
And said, "Yet was this fate to thee foreshown,
Instead of craving thus the knightly course,
Better mine embassy wouldst thou have done.
Some other knight, that equals me in force,
I pray thee bid the Moorish king send down,
Nor weary me by forcing me to meet
Champions like thee untried in martial feat."

The third encounter craved Lanfusa's son,
And cried, "Not that I better hope to fare,
But that to warriors who this course have run,
My fall may furnish an excuse more fair."
Next, with all arms that martial jousters don,
Clothed him, and of a hundred steeds that were
Ready for service, kept in lordly stall,
For speed and action chose the best of all.

He bound him for the tourney, on his side,
But first saluted her and she the knight.
"If 'tis allowed to ask," the lady cried,
"Tell me in courtesy how ye are hight."
In this Ferrau the damsel satisfied,
Who rarely hid himself from living wight.
"Ye will I not refuse," subjoined the dame,
"Albeit I to meet another came."

"And who?" the Spaniard said. The maid replied,
"Rogero," and pronounced the word with pain.
And, in so saying, her fair face was dyed
All over with the rose's crimson grain.
She after added, "Hither have I hied,
To prove how justly famed his might and main.
No other care have I, no other call,
But with that gentle youth to try a fall."

She spoke the word in all simplicity,
Which some already may in malice wrest.
Ferrau replied, "Assured I first must be
Which of us two is schooled in warfare best.
If what has chanced to many, falls on me,
Hither, when I return, shall be addrest,
To mend my fault, that gentle cavalier,
With whom you so desire to break a spear."

Discoursing all this while, the martial maid
Spake with her beaver up, without disguise.
Ferrau, as that fair visage he surveyed,
Perceived he was half vanquished by its eyes.
And to himself, in under tone, he said,
"He seems an angel sent from Paradise;
And, though he should not harm me with his lance,
I am already quelled by that sweet glance."

They take their ground, and to the encounter ride,
And, like those others, Ferrau goes to ground;
His courser Bradamant retained, and cried,
"Return, and keep thy word with me as bound."
Shamed, he returned, and by his monarch's side,
Among his peers, the young Rogero found;
And let the stripling know the stranger knight,
Without the walls, defied him to the fight.

Rogero (for not yet that warrior knows
What champion him in duel would assail)
Nigh sure of victory, with transport glows,
And bids his followers bring his plate and mail;
Nor having seen beneath those heavy blows
The rest dismounted, makes his spirit quail.
But how he armed, how sallied, what befel
That knight, in other canto will I tell.

Rogero heard the call in joyous vein,
And bade his arms be brought; now while in view
Of Agramant he donned the plate and chain,
Those lords the former question moved anew—
Who was the knight, that on the martial plain
The manage of the lance so quaintly knew?
And of Ferrau, who spake with him whilere,
Craved if to him was known that cavalier.

"Be ye assured," to them Ferrau replied,
"He is not one of those I hear you cite
To me for I his open face descried.
Rinaldo's youthful brother seemed the knight.
But since his doughty valor I have tried,
And wot not such is Richardetto's might,
I ween it is his sister, who, I hear,
Resembles much in mien that martial peer.

"The damsel equals well, so Rumor tells,
Rinaldo, and every paladin in fray:
But brother she and cousin both excels,
Measured by that which I have seen to-day."
Hearing him, while upon her praise he dwells.
As the sky reddens with the morning ray,
Rogero's face is flushed with crimson hue,
And his heart throbs, nor knows he what to do.

Stung, at these tidings, by the amorous dart,
Within, new fire inflames the cavalier;
And straight, together with the burning smart,
Shoots through his bones a chill, produced by fear;
Fear, that new wrath had stifled in her heart
That mighty love wherewith she burned whilere.
Confused he stands, irresolute and slow,
And undecided if to stay or go.

Now fierce Marphisa, who was there, and prest
By huge desire to meet the stranger wight,
And armed withal (for, save in iron vest,
Her seldom would you find by day or night),
Hearing Rogero is in armor drest,
Fearing to lose the honor of the fight,
If first that champion with the stranger vies;
Thinks to prevent the youth and win the prize.

She leapt upon her horse, and thither hied
Where Aymon's daughter on the listed plain,
With palpitating heart, upon her side,
Waited Rogero; whom the damsel fain
Would make her prisoner, and but schemed to guide
Her lance in mode the stripling least to pain.
Marphisa from the city portal fares,
And on her gallant helm a phœnix wears.

Whether the maid would publish, in her pride,
That she was single in the world for might;
Or whether by that symbol signified
That she would live exempt from bridal rite—
Her closely Aymon's martial daughter eyed;
When seeing not those features, her delight,
She craves the damsel's name before they move,
And hears that it is she who joys her love;

Or rather she, that gentle lady thought,
Had joyed her loved; and whom she hated so,
Her to Death's door her anger would have brought,
Unless she venged her sorrow on the foe.
She wheeled her courser round, with fury fraught,
Less with desire to lay her rival low,
Than with the lance to pierce her in mid breast.
And put her every jealousy at rest.

Perforce to ground must go the royal maid,
To prove if hard or soft the listed plain,
And be with such unwonted scorn appaid.
That she is nearly maddened by disdain.
Scarce was she thrown, before her trenchant blade
She bared, and hurried to avenge the stain.
Cried Aymon's daughter, no less proud of heart,
"What art thou doing? Thou my prisoner art."

"Though I have courtesy for others, none,"
She said, "from me, Marphisa, shalt thou find.
Since evermore I hear of thee, as one
To pride and every churlishness inclined."
Marphisa, at these words, was heard to groan,
As roars in some sea-rock the prisoned wind.
She screamed an answer; but its sense was drowned
(Such rage confused that damsel) in the sound.

She whirls this while her falchion, and would fain
Wound horse or rider in the paunch or breast;
But Aymon's watchful daughter turns the rein,
And on one side her courser leaps; possest
With furious anger and with fierce disdain,
She at her opposite her lance addrest;
And hardly touched the damsel, ere, astound,
Marphisa fell, reversed upon the ground.

Scarce down, Marphisa started from the plain,
Intent fell mischief with her sword to do,
Bradamant couched her golden spear again,
And yet again the damsel overthrew.
Yet Bradamant, though blest with might and main,
Was not so much the stronger of the two
As to have flung the maid in every joust,
But that such power was in the lance's thrust.

This while some knights (some knights upon our side,
I say) forth issuing from the city, go
Toward the field of strife, which did divide
The squadrons, here and there, of either foe—
Not half a league of one another wide—
Seeing their knight such mighty prowess show;
Their knight, but whom no otherwise they knew
Than as a warrior of the Christian crew.

Troyano's generous son, who had espied
This band approaching to the city wall,
For due defence would every means provide,
And every peril, every case forestall;
And orders many to take arms, who ride
Forth from the ramparts, at the monarch's call.
With them Rogero goes, in armor cased,
Balked of the battle by Marphisa's haste.

The enamored youth, with beating heart, intent,
Stood by, the issue of the joust to view,
For his dear consort fearing the event,
In that he well Marphisa's valor knew—
At the beginning I would say—when, bent
On mischief, fiercely closed the furious two;
But when that duel's turn the stripling eyes,
He stands amazed and stupid with surprise;

And when he saw unfinished was the fight,
At the first onset, like the jousts whilere,
Misdoubting some strange accident, in sprite,
Sore vexed, this while remained the cavalier.
To either maid wished well that youthful knight;
For both were loved, but not alike were dear.
For this the stripling's love was fury, fire;
For that 'twas rather fondness than desire.

If so Rogero could with honor do,
He willingly the warriors would divide;
But his companions, in the fear to view
Victory with King Charles's knight abide,
Esteeming him the better of the two,
Break in between and turn their arms aside;
Upon the other part, the Christian foes
Advance, and both divisions come to blows.

On this side and that other, rings the alarm,
Which in those camps, is sounded every day,
Bidding the unmounted mount, the unarmed arm,
And all their standards seek, without delay,
Where, under separate flags, the squadrons swarm,
More than one shrilling trump is heard to bray;
And as their rattling notes the riders call,
Rousing the foot, beat drum and atabal.

As fierce as thought could think, 'twixt either host
Kindled the fell and sanguinary fray.
The daring damsel, fair Dordona's boast,
Sore vexed and troubled, that in the affray
She cannot compass what she covets most—
Marphisa with avenging steel to slay—
Now here, now there, amid the medley flies,
Hoping to see the youth for whom she sighs.

By the eagle argent on the shield of blue
She recognized Rogero, mid the rest.
With eyes and thought intent, she stops to view
The warrior's manly shoulders and his breast,
Fair face and movements full of graceful shew;
And then the maid, with mickle spite possest,
Thinking another joys the stripling's love,
Thus speaks, as sovereign rage and fury move.

"Shall then another kiss those lips so bright
And sweet, if those fair lips are lost to me?
Ah! never other shall in thee delight;
For if not mine, no other's shalt thou be.
Rather than die alone and of despite,
I with this hand will slay myself and thee,
That if I lose thee here, at least in hell
With thee I to eternity may dwell.

"If thou slay'st me, there is good reason, I
The comfort too of vengeance should obtain;
In that all edicts and all equity
The death of him that causes death ordain;
Nor, since you justly, I unjustly, die,
Deem I that thine is equal to my pain.
I him who seeks my life, alas! shall spill,
Thou her that loves and worships thee wouldst kill.

"My hand, why hast thou not the hardiment
To rive with steel the bosom of my foe,
That me so many times to death has shent,
Under the faith of love, in peaceful show;
Him who to take my life can now consent,
Nor even have pity of my cruel woe?
Dare, valiant heart, this impious man to slay,
And let his death my thousand deaths appay!"

So said, she spurred at him amid the throng;
But, first "Defend thee, false Rogero!" cried.
"No more, if I have power, in spoil and wrong,
"Done to a virgin heart, shalt thou take pride."
Hearing that voice the hostile ranks among,
He deems, and truly deems, he hears his bride;
Whose voice the youth remembers in such wise,
That mid a thousand would he recognize.

Her further meaning well did he divine,
Weening that him she in that speech would blame,
For having broke their pact; and—with design,
The occasion of his failure to proclaim—
Of his desire for parley made a sign;
But she, with vizor closed, already came,
Raging and grieved, intent, with vengeful hand,
To fling the youth; nor haply upon sand.

Rogero, when he saw her so offended,
Fixed himself firmly in his arms and seat.
He rests his lance, but holds the staff suspended,
So that it shall not harm her when they meet.
She that to smite and pierce the childe intended,
Pitiless, and inflamed with furious heat,
Has not the courage, when she sees him near,
To fling, or do him outrage with the spear.

Void of effect, 'tis thus their lances go;
And it is well; since Love with burning dart,
Tilting this while at one and the other foe,
Has lanced the enamored warriors in mid-heart.
Unable at the childe to aim her blow,
The lady spent her rage in other part,
And mighty deeds achieved, which fame will earn
While overhead the circling heavens shall turn.

More than three hundred men in that affray
In little space by her dismounted lie.
Alone that warlike damsel wins the day;
From her alone the Moorish people fly.
To her Rogero, circling, threads his way,
And says, "Unless I speak with you I die.
Hear me, for love of heaven!—what have I done,
Alas! that ever mine approach ye shun?"

As when soft southern breezes are unpent,
Which with a tepid breath from seaward blow,
The snows dissolve, and torrents find a vent,
And ice, so hard erewhile, is seen to flow;
At those entreaties, at that brief lament,
Rinaldo's sister's heart is softened so;
Forthwith compassionate and pious grown;
Which anger fain had made more hard than stone.

Would she not, could she not, she nought replied,
But spurred aslant the ready Rabicane,
And, signing to Rogero, rode as wide
As she could wend from that embattled train;
Then to a sheltered valley turned aside,
Wherein embosomed was a little plain.
In the mid lawn a wood of cypress grew,
Whose saplings of one stamp appeared to view.

Within that thicket, of white marble wrought,
Is a proud monument, and newly made;
And he that makes inquiry here is taught
In few brief verses who therein is laid.
But of those lines, methinks, took little thought
Fair Bradamant, arriving in the glade.
Rogero spurred his courser, and pursued
And overtook that damsel in the wood.

But turn we to Marphisa, that anew
During this space was seated on her steed,
And sought again the valiant champion, who
At the first onset cast her on the mead;
And saw, how from the mingling host withdrew
Rogero, after that strange knight to speed;
Nor deemed the youth pursued in love; she thought
He but to end their strife and quarrel sought.

She pricks her horse behind the two, and gains,
Well nigh as soon as they, that valley; how
Her coming thither either lover pains,
Who lives and loves, untaught by me, may know.
But sorest vext sad Bradamant remains,
Beholding her whence all her sorrows flow.
Who shall persuade the damsel but that love
For young Rogero brings her to that grove?

And him perfidious she anew did name.
"Perfidious, was it not enough," she said,
"That I should know thy perfidy from fame,
But must the witness of thy guilt be made?
I wot, to drive me from thee is thine aim;
And I, that thy desires may be appaid,
Will die; but strive, in yielding up my breath,
She too shall die, the occasion of my death."

Angrier than venomed viper, with a bound,
So saying, she upon Marphisa flies;
And plants so well the spear, that she, astound,
Fell backward on the champaign in such guise,
Nigh half her helm was buried in the ground;
Nor was the damsel taken by surprise;
Nay, did her best the encounter to withstand;
Yet with her helmed head she smote the sand.

Bradamant who will die, or in that joust
Will put to death Marphisa, rages so,
She has no mind again with lance to thrust,
Again that martial maid to overthrow;
But thinks her head to sever from the bust,
Where it half buried lies, with murderous blow;
Away the enchanted lance that damsel flings,
Unsheathes the sword, and from her courser springs.

But is too slow withal; for on her feet
She finds Marphisa, with such fierce disdain
Inflamed, at being in that second heat
So easily reversed upon the plain,
She hears in vain exclaim, in vain entreat,
Rogero, who beholds their strife with pain.
So blinded are the pair with spite and rage,
That they with desperate fury battle wage.

At half-sword's length engage the struggling foes;
And, such their stubborn mood, with shortened brand
They still approach, and now so fiercely close,
They cannot choose but grapple, hand to hand.
Her sword, no longer needful, each foregoes;
And either now new means of mischief planned.
Rogero both implores with earnest suit;
But supplicates the twain with little fruit.

When he entreaties unavailing found,
The youth prepared by force to part the two,
Their poniards snatched away, and on the ground,
Beneath a cypress-tree, the daggers threw.
When they no weapons have wherewith to wound,
With prayer and threat, he interferes anew;
But vainly; for, since better weapons lack,
Each other they with fists and feet attack.

Rogero ceased not from his task; he caught,
By hand or arm, the fiercely struggling pair,
Till to the utmost pitch of fury wrought
The fell Marphisa's angry passions were.
She, that this ample world esteemed at nought,
Of the childe's friendship had no further care.
Plucked from the foe, she ran to seize her sword,
And fastened next upon that youthful lord.

"Like a discourteous man and churl ye do,
Rogero, to disturb another's fight;
A deed," she cried, "this hand shall make ye rue,
Which, I intend, shall vanquish both." The knight
Sought fierce Marphisa's fury to subdue
With gentle speech; but full of such despite
He found her, and inflamed with such disdain,
All parley was a waste of time and pain.

At last his falchion young Rogero drew;
For ire as well had flushed that cavalier;
Nor it is my belief that ever shew
Athens or Rome, or city whatsoe'er,
Witnessed, which ever so rejoiced the view,
As this rejoices, as this sight is dear
To Bradamant, when, through their strife displaced,
Every suspicion from her breast is chased.

Bradamant took her sword, and to descry
The duel of those champions stood apart.
The god of war, descended from the sky,
She deemed Rogero, for his strength and art.
If he seemed Mars, Marphisa to the eye
Seemed an infernal Fury, on her part.
'Tis true, that for a while the youthful knight
Against that damsel put not forth his might.

He knew the virtues of that weapon well,
Such proof thereof the knight erewhile had made.
Where'er it falls perforce is every spell
Annulled, or by its stronger virtue stayed.
Hence so Rogero smote, it never fell
Upon its edge or point, but still the blade
Descended flat. He long this rule observes,
Yet once he from his patient purpose swerves.

In that, a mighty stroke Marphisa sped,
Meaning to cleave the brainpan of her foe.
He raised the buckler to defend his head,
And the sword smote upon its bird of snow,
Nor broke nor bruised the shield, by spell bestead;
But his arm rang astounded by the blow;
Nor aught but Hector's mail the sword had stopt,
Whose furious blow would his left arm have lopt;

And had upon his head descended shear,
Whereat designed to strike the savage fair.
Scarce his left arm can good Rogero rear,
Can scarce the shield and blazoned bird upbear.
All pity he casts off, and 'twould appear
As in his eyes a lighted torch did glare.
As hard as he can smite, he smites; and woe
To thee, Marphisa, if he plants the blow!

I cannot tell you truly in what wise
That falchion swerves against a cypress-stock,
In such close-serried ranks the saplings rise,
Buried above a palm within the block.
At this the mountain and the plain that lies
Beneath it, with a furious earthquake rock;
And from that marble monument proceeds
A voice, that every mortal voice exceeds.

The horrid voice exclaims: "Your quarrel leave
For 'twere a deed unjust and inhumane,
That brother should of life his sister reave,
Or brother by his sister's hand be slain,
Rogero and Marphisa mine, believe!
The tale which I deliver is not vain
Seed of one father, in one womb ye lay;
And first together saw the light of day.

"Galaciëlla's children are ye, whom
She to Rogero, hight the second, bare.
Whose brothers, having, by unrighteous doom,
Of your unhappy sire deprived that fair,
Not heeding that she carried in her womb
Ye, who yet suckers of their lineage are,
Her in a rotten carcase of a boat,
To founder in mid ocean, set afloat.

"But Fortune, that had destined you whilere,
And yet unborn, to many a fair emprize,
Your mother to that lonely shore did steer,
Which overright the sandy Syrtes lies.
Where, having given you birth, that spirit dear
Forthwith ascended into Paradise.
A witness of the piteous case was I,
So heaven had willed, and such your destiny!

"I to the dame as decent burial gave
As could be given upon that desert sand.
Ye, well enveloped in my vest, I save,
And bear to Mount Carena from the strand;
And make a lioness leave whelps and cave,
And issue from the wood, with semblance bland.
Ye, twice ten months, with mickle fondness bred
And from her paps the milky mother fed.

"Needing to quit my home upon a day,
And journey through the country, (as you can
Haply remember ye) we on our way
Were overtaken by an Arab clan.
Those robbers thee, Marphisa, bore away;
While young Rogero 'scaped, who better ran.
Bereaved of thee, thy woful loss I wept,
And with more watchful care thy brother kept.

"Rogero, if Atlantes watched thee well,
While yet he was alive, thou best dost know.
I the fixed stars had heard of thee foretell,
That thou shouldst perish by a treachcrous foe
In Christian land; and till their influence fell
Was ended, labored to avert the blow;
Nor having power in fine thy will to guide,
I sickened sore, and of my sorrow died.

"But here, before my death, for in this glade
I knew thou should'st with bold Marphisa fight,
I with huge stones, amassed by hellish aid,
Had this fair monument of marble dight;
And I to Charon with loud outcries said
I would not he should hence convey my sprite,
Till here, prepared in deadly fray to strive,
Rogero and his sister should arrive.

"Thus has my spirit for this many a day
Waited thy coming in these beauteous groves;
So be no more to jealous fears a prey,
O Bradamant, because Rogero loves.
But me to quit the cheerful realms of day,
And seek the darksome cloisters it behoves."
Here ceased the voice; which in the childe amazed
And those two damsels mighty marvel raised.

Gladly a sister in the martial queen
Rogero, she in him a brother knows;
Who now embrace, nor move her jealous spleen,
That with the love of young Rogero glows;
And citing what, and when, and where had been
Their childish deeds, as they to memory rose,
In summing up past time, more sure they hold
The things whereof the wizard's spirit told.

Rogero from Marphisa does not hide
How Bradamant to him at heart is dear;
And by what obligations he is tied
In moving words relates the cavalier;
Nor ceases till he has, on either side,
Turned to firm love the hate they bore whilere.
When, as a sign of peace, and discord chased,
They, at his bidding, tenderly embraced.

"Here" said Marphisa, "before Heaven I vow,
That Christ my father worshiped, to adore:
And till I venge my parents on the foe
To wear this armor; and I will deplore
Your deed, Rogero, and deplore even now,
That you should swell the squadrons of the Moor,
Or other follower of the Moslem faith,
Save sword in hand, and to the paynim's scathe."

To Bradamant the bold Marphisa cries:
"Let him begone, nor doubt but I, before
Many days pass, will manage in such wise,
That Agramant shall be his lord no more."
So says the martial damsel, nor implies
The secret purpose that she has in store.
Making his congé to the friendly twain,
To join his king, Rogero turns the rein.

CANTO XXVII

To Arles-town, whither had his King conveyed
His remnant, now Rogero rode anew;
While they that, since their kindred was displayed,
Had a close friendship formed—the damsels two—
Thither together go where Charles had made
His mightiest effort, with the Christian crew;
Hoping by siege or fight to break the foe,
And free his kingdom from so long a woe.

By them was Charles saluted reverently,
And the first day was this (has Turpin shown)
Marphisa had been seen to bend her knee;
For Pepin's royal son to her, alone,
Deserving of such duty seemed to be,
Mid emperors or kings that filled a throne,
Baptized or infidel, of all those named
For mighty riches, or for valor famed.

Her kindly Charlemagne received, and wide
Of the pavilions met, in open view;
And, above king, and prince, and peer, beside
Himself the monarch placed that damsel true.
Who go not, are dismissed; so none abide
In little time, except the good and few.
The paladines and lords remain; without,
Is left the unrespected rabble-rout.

Marphisa first began in grateful strain:
"Unconquered Cæsar, glorious and august,
Who, to Alcides' strait from Indian main,
Mak'st Scythian's pale and Æthiop's race adust
Revere thy Christian cross of snowy grain—
Of earthly monarchs thou most sage and just—
Hither thy glory, which no limits bound,
Has brought me from the world's extremest ground;

"And (to avow the truth) in jealous mood
Alone I came, alone with thee to fight;
Because I grudged that king so puissant should
Exist on earth, save he observed my rite.
Hence reek thy ravaged fields with Christian blood;
And yet with greater rancor and despite,
Like cruel foe, I purposed to offend,
But that it chanced one changed me to a friend.

"When to worst harm and scathe thy bands I doom,
I find (as at my leisure I will show)
Rogero of Risa was my father, whom
An evil brother traitorously laid low.
Me my sad mother carried in her womb
Beyond the sea, and bore in want and woe.
Till my seventh year by wizard nourished, I
Was stolen from him by thieves of Araby.

"And, for my father thee as kinsman served,
So thou a kin and servant hast in me;
And I that envy, that fierce hate, which nerved
Mine arm whilere, now blot from memory.
Nay, these for evil Agramant reserved,
And for his sire's and uncle's kin shall be;
They who were whilom guilty of the death
Of that unhappy pair who gave me breath."

Charles, no less eloquent upon his side,
Than bold in deed and prudent in design,
Much that illustrious lady magnified,
And much her father, much her noble line:
He courteously to every point replied;
And of his heart his open front was sign.
As his last words, that he received the maid
As kinswoman and child, the monarch said.

Then rose and locked her in a new embrace,
And kissed her, like a daughter, on the brow.
Morgana and Clermont's kin, with joyful face,
All thither troop; 'twere tedious to tell how
Rinaldo did the gentle damsel grace;
For he had oftentimes espied ere now
Her martial prowess, tried by goodly test,
When they with girding siege Albracca prest.

In sacred stole pontifical arrayed,
Her the archbishop Turpin did baptize;
Charlemagne from the healthful font the maid
Uplifted with befitting ceremonies.
But it is time the witless head to aid
With that which treasured in the phial lies,
Wherewith Astolpho, from the lowest star,
Descended in Elias' fiery car.

The Duke descended from the lucid round,
On this our earthly planet's loftiest height.
Whither he with that blessed vase was bound,
Which was the mighty champion's brain to right.
An herb of sovereign virtue on that ground
The apostle shows, and with it bids the knight
The Nubian's eyeballs touch, when him anew
He visits and restore that sovereign's view.

Great was the joy, and great was the delight,
Wherewith that King received the English lord;
Who well remembered how the gentle knight
Had from the loathsome harpies freed his board.
But when the humor that obscured his sight
Valiant Astolpho scaled, and now restored
Was the blind sovereign's eyesight as before,
He would that warrior as a god adore.

So that not only those whom he demands
For the Bisertine war he gives in aid,
But adds a hundred thousand from his bands,
And offer of his royal person made.
Scarce on the open plain embattled stands—
All foot—the Nubian host, for war arrayed,
For few the horses which that region bore;
Of elephants and camels a large store.

The night before the day, when on its road
The Nubian force should march, Astolpho rose,
And his winged hippogryph again bestrode:
Then, hurrying ever south, in fury goes
To a high hill, the southern wind's abode;
Whence he toward the Bears in fury blows;
There finds a cave, through whose strait entrance breaks
The fell and furious Auster, when he wakes.

He, as his master erst instruction gave,
With him an empty bladder had conveyed;
Which, at the vent of that dim Alpine cave,
Wherein reposed the wearied wind, was laid
Quaintly and softly by the baron brave;
And so unlooked-for was the ambuscade,
That, issuing forth at morn, to sweep the plains,
Auster imprisoned in the skin remains.

To Nubia he, rejoicing in his prey,
Returns; and with that very light the peer,
With the black host, sets out upon his way,
And lets the victual follow in his rear.
Toward Mount Atlas with his whole array
In safety goes the glorious cavalier.
Through shifting plains of powdery sand he past,
Nor dreaded danger from the sultry blast;

And having gained the mountain's hither side,
Whence are discerned the plain, and distant brine,
He chooses from the swarm he has to guide
The noblest and most fit for discipline;
And makes them, here and there, in troops divide,
At a hill's foot, wherewith the plains confine;
Then leaves his host and climbs the hill's ascent,
Like one that is on lofty thoughts intent.

After he, lowly kneeling in the dust,
His holy master had implored, in true
Assurance he was heard, he downward thrust
A heap of stones. Oh, what things may he do
That in the Saviour wholly puts his trust!
The stones beyond the use of nature grew;
Which rolling to the sandy plain below,
Next, neck and muzzle, legs and belly show.

They, neighing shrill, down narrow paths repair,
With lusty leaps; and lighting on the plain,
Uplift the croup, like coursers as they are,
Some bay, some roan, and some of dapple stain.
The crowds that waiting in the valleys were,
Laid hands on them, and seized them by the rein.
Thus in a thought each soldier had his horse,
Born ready reined and saddled for the course.

He fourscore thousand of his Nubian power,
One hundred and two footmen, in a day
To horsemen changes, who wide Africk scour,
And, upon every side, sack, burn, and slay.
Agramant had intrusted town and tower,
Till his return, to King Branzardo's sway,
To Fersa's king, and him of the Algaziers;
And these against Astolpho lead their spears.

Erewhile a nimble bark, with sail and oar,
They had dispatched, which, stirring feet and wings,
News of the Nubian monarch's outrage bore
To Agramant from his vicegerent kings,
That rests not, night nor day, till to the shore
Of Provence she her doleful tiding brings;
And finds her monarch half subdued in Arles,
For camped within a mile was conquering Charles.

Agramant, hearing in what peril lies
His realm, through his attack on Pepin's reign,
Him in this pressing peril to advise,
Calls kings and princes of the paynim train;
And when he once or twice has turned his eyes
On sage Sobrino and the king of Spain—
Eldest and wisest they those lords among—
The monarch so bespeaks the assembled throng:

"Albeit it fits not captain, as I know,
To say on this I thought not, this I say;
Because when from a quarter comes the blow,
From every human forethought far away,
'Tis for such fault a fair excuse, I trow;
And here all hinges; I did ill to lay
Unfurnished Africk open to attack,
If there was ground to fear the Nubian sack.

"But who could think, save only God on high,
Prescient of all that is to be below,
That, from a land beneath such distant sky,
Such mighty host would come, to work us woe?
'Twixt whom and us unstable deserts lie,
Those shifting sands, which restless whirlwinds blow:
Yet they their camp have round Biserta placed,
And laid the better part of Africk waste.

"I now on this, O peers! your counsel crave.
If, bootless, homeward I should wend my way,
Or should not such a fair adventure waive,
Till Charles with me a prisoner I convey;
Or how I may as well our Africk save,
And ruin this redoubted empire, say.
Who can advise, is prayed his lore to shew,
That we may learn the best, and that pursue."

He said; and on Marsilius seated nigh
Next turned his eyes, who in the signal read,
That it belonged to him to make reply
To what the King of Africa had said.
The Spaniard rose, and bending reverently
To Agramant the knee as well as head,
Again his honored seat in council prest,
And in these words the Moorish king addrest:

"I well believe that from some neighboring hill
The Arabs have poured down, to waste the plain,
Who, for the country was defended ill,
Have taken, burned, destroyed and sacked the slain;
And that Branzardo, who your place doth fill,
As viceroy and lieutenant of the reign,
Has set down thousands where he tens should write;
The better to excuse him in your sight.

"The Nubian squadrons, I will even yield,
Have been rained down on Africk from the skies;
Or haply they have come, in clouds concealed,
In that their march was hidden from all eyes.
Think you, because unaided in the field,
Your Africk from such host in peril lies?
Your garrisons were sure of coward vein,
If they were scared by such a craven train.

"Now take your time for vengeance, when the son
Of Pepin is without his nephew's aid.
Since bold Orlando is away, by none
Of the hostile sect resistance can be made.
If, through neglect or blindness, be foregone
The glorious Fortune, which for you has stayed,
She her bald front, as now her hair, will show,
To our long infamy and mighty woe."

Thus warily the Spanish King replied,
Proving by this and other argument,
The Moorish squadrons should in France abide,
Till Charlemagne was into exile sent.
But King Sobrino, he that plainly spied
The scope wherein Marsilius was intent,
To public good preferring private gain,
So spake in answer to the King of Spain:

"My liege, when I to peace exhorted you,
Would that my prophecy had proved less just!
Or, if I was to prove a prophet true,
Ye in Sobrino had reposed more trust
Than in King Rodomont and in that crew,
Alzirdo, Martasine, and Marbalust!
Whom I would here see gladly, front to front;
But see most gladly boastful Rodomont,

"To twit that warrior with his threat, to do
By France what by the brittle glass is done;
And throughout heaven and hell your course pursue,
Yea (as the monarch said) your course outrun.
Still lapped in foul and loathsome ease, while you
So need his help, lies Ulien's lazy son;
And I, that as a coward was decried
For my true prophecy, am at your side,

"And ever will be while this life I bear;
Which, albeit 'tis with years sore laden, still
Daily for you is risked with them that are
The best of France; and—be he who he will—
There is not mortal living who will dare
To say Sobrino's deeds were ever ill;
Yea, many who vaunt more, amid your host,
Have not so much, nay lighter, cause for boast.

"I speak these words to show that what whilere
I said and say again, has neither sprung
From evil heart, nor is the fruit of fear;
But that true love and duty move my tongue.
You homeward with what haste you may to steer,
I counsel, your assembled bands among;
For little is the wisdom of that wight
Who risks his own to gain another's right.

"As often as ye issue on the plain,
Worsted so oft, or broken, shall you be.
If oft united Africa and Spain
Were losers, when sixteen to eight were we,
What will ensue when banded with Almayn
Are England, Scotland, France, and Italy?
When with our six twice six their weapons cross,
What else can we expect but shame and loss?

"But if, as first defeated, on your part
It seems a shame to offer peace, and ye
Have war and wasteful battle more at heart,
Waged hitherto with what success you see,
At least to gain the victory use art,
Which may be yours, if you are ruled by me
Lay all your quarrel's trial on one peer,
And let Rogero be that cavalier.

"Such our Rogero is, ye know and I,
That—pitted one to one in listed fight—
Not Roland, not Rinaldo stands more high,
Nor whatsoever other Christian knight.
But would ye kindle warfare far and nigh,
Though superhuman be that champion's might,
The warrior is but one mid many spears,
Matched singly with a host of martial peers.

"Meseemeth, if to you it seemeth good,
Ye should propose to Charles the war to end;
And that, to spare the constant waste of blood,
Which his, and countless of your warriors spend,
He, by a knight of yours to be withstood,
A champion, chosen from his best should send;
And those two all the warfare wage alone,
Till one prevails, and one is overthrown;

"On pact the King, whose champion in the joust
Is loser, tribute to that other pay.
Nor will this pact displease King Charles, I trust,
Though his was the advantage in the fray.
Then of his arms Rogero so robust
I deem, that he will surely win the day;
Who would prevail (so certain is our right)
Though Mars himself should be his opposite."

With these and other sayings yet more sound,
So wrought Sobrino, he his end obtained;
And on that day interpreters were found,
And they that day to Charles their charge explained,
Charles, whom such matchless cavaliers surround,
Believes the battle is already gained;
And chooses good Rinaldo for the joust,
Next to Orlando in his sovereign's trust.

Rogero, though much honored, on his part,
That him his King has chosen from the rest,
To whom a trust so weighty to impart,
As of his many martial lords the best,
Yet shows a troubled face; not that the heart
Of that good knight unworthy fears molest;
Not only none Rinaldo would have bred;
Him, with Orlando leagued, he would not dread;

But because sister of the Christian knight
(He knows) is she, his consort true and dear;
That to the stripling evermore did write,
As one sore injured by that cavalier.
Now, if to ancient sins he should unite
A mortal combat with Montalban's peer,
Her, although loving, will he anger so,
Not lightly she her hatred will forego.

Nought can result to Bradamant but pain,
Whatever is the doubtful combat's end.
She will not think Rogero can be slain;
For this, 'twould seem, her very heart would rend;
And should our Lord the fall of France ordain,
That kingdom for more sins than one to shend,
The gentle maid, beside a brother's loss,
Would have to weep a worse and bitterer cross.

But she that ever, when things adverse were,
With faithful succor Bradamant had stayed,
I say the weird Melissa. could not bear
To hear the wailings of the woful maid;
She hurried to console her in her care,
And proffered succor in due time and said,
She would disturb that duel 'twixt the twain.
The occasion of such grief and cruel pain.

Meanwhile their weapons for the future fray
Rogero and Duke Aymon's son prepared;
The choice whereof with that good warrior lay,
The Roman empire's knight by Charles declared;
And he, like one that ever. from the day
He lost his goodly steed afoot had fared,
Made choice, afoot and fenced with plate and mail,
His foe with ax and dagger to assail.

Whether Chance moved Montalban's martial lord,
Or Malagigi, provident and sage,
That knew how young Rogero's charmed sword
Cleft helm and hauberk in its greedy rage,
One and the other warrior made accord,
(As said) without their falchions to engage.
The place of combat chosen by that twain
Was near old Arles, upon a spacious plain.

After short pause, was seen upon the plain
The paynim host in diffrent squadrons dight.
Rich in barbaric pomp, amid that train,
Rode Afric's monarch, ready armed for fight;
Bay was the steed he backed, with sable mane.
Two of his legs were pied, his forehead white.
Fast beside Agramant, Rogero came,
And him to serve Marsilius thought no shame.

On the other part, without his camp appears
Charles, with his men-at-arms in squadrons dight;
Who in such order led his cavaliers
As they would keep if marshaled for the fight.
Fenced is the monarch with his famous peers.
And with him wends, all armed, Montalban's knight,
Armed save his helmet, erst Mambrino's casque,
To carry which is Danish Ogier's task.

After the second choice of arms was made
By him, the champion of the paynim clan,
Thither two priests of either sect conveyed
Two books; that, carried by one holy man,
Him of our law, Christ's perfect life displayed;
Those others' volume was their Alcoran.
The Emperor in his hands the Gospel took,
The King of Africa that other book.

Rogero pledges first his knightly word,
Should his King mar, or send to mar, the fray,
He him no more as leader or as lord
Will serve, but wholly Charlemagne obey,
Rinaldo, if in breach of their accord,
Him from the field King Charles would bear away,
Ere one or the other is subdued in fight,
That he will be the Moorish monarch's knight.

When ended are the ceremonies, here
And there, to seek their camps the two divide.
Nor long therein delayed; when trumpets clear
The time for their encounter signified.
Now to the charge advanced each cavalier,
Measuring with cautious care his every stride.
Lo! the assault begins; now low, now high.
That pair the sounding steel in circles ply.

Now with the ax's blade now with its heel
Their strokes they at the head or foot address;
And these so skilfully and nimbly deal.
As needs must shock all credence to express.
The childe, that at her brother aims the steel,
Who doth his miserable soul possess,
Evermore with such caution strikes his blow.
That he is deemed less vigorous than his foe.

Than that fell woe which on Rogero weighs,
Harder and bitterer pain forsooth is none
That upon flesh and more on spirit preys;
For of two deaths there is no scaping one.
Him if in strife o'erlaid Rinaldo slays;
Bradamant if Rinaldo is outdone.
For if he killed her brother, well he knew
Her hate, than death more hateful, would ensue.

Rinaldo, unimpeded by such thought,
Strove in all ways Rogero to o'erthrow;
Fierce and despiteous whirled his ax, and sought
Now in the arms, now head, to wound the foe.
Rogero circled here and there, and caught
Upon his weapon's shaft the coming blow;
And, if he ever smote, aye strove to smite
Where he should injure least Montalban's knight.

To most of them that led the paynim bands.
But too unequal seemed the fierce assay.
Too slowly young Rogero plied his hands;
Too well Rinaldo kept the childe at bay.
With troubled face the king of Afric stands:
He sighed, and breathless gazed upon the fray;
And all the blame of that ill counsel flung
On King Sobrino's head, from whom it sprung.

Meanwhile the weird Melissa, she—the font
Of all that wizards or enchanters know—
Had by her art transformed her female front,
And taken Argier's mighty shape; in show
And gesture she appeared as Rodomont.
And seemed, like him, in dragon's hide to go:
Such was her belted sword and such her shield;
Nor aught was wanting that he wore afield.

She toward Troyano's mournful son did guide,
In form of courser, a familiar sprite,
And with a troubled visage loudly cried,
"My liege, this is too foul an oversight,
A stripling boy, in peril yet untried,
Against a Gaul so stout and famed in fight,
Your champion in so fierce a strife to make;
Where Afric's realm and honor are at stake.

"Let not this battle be pursued, my lord,
In that 'twould cost our Moorish cause too dear.
Let sin of broken faith and forfeit word
Fall upon Rodomont! take thou no fear!
Let each now show the metal of his sword.
Each for a hundred stands when I am here."
So upon Agramant this counsel wrought,
That king pressed forward without further thought.

He, thinking that the monarch of Algiers
Is with him, of the pact has little care;
And would not rate a thousand cavaliers
So high, if banded in his aid they were.
Hence steeds reined-in and spurred, hence leveled spears,
Are seen in one short instant here and there.
Melissa, when the hosts are mixed in fight
By her false phantoms, vanishes from sight.

The champions two, that, against all accord,
Against all faith, disturbed their duel see,
No longer strive in fight, but pledge their word,
Yea, put aside all hostile injury
That they, on neither part, will draw the sword,
Until they better certified shall be
Who broke the pact established by that twain—
Young Agramant, or aged Charlemagne.

They swear anew, the King who had o'erthrown
That truce, and broken faith, as foe to treat.
The field of combat is turned upside down;
Some hurry to the charge, and some retreat.
Who most deserved disgrace, who most renown,
Was seen, on both hands, in the selfsame feat;
All ran alike; but, 'mid that wild affray,
These ran to meet the foe, those ran away.

Marphisa piercing her first victim's breast
(Two yards beyond his back the lance did pass),
In briefer time than 'tis by me exprest,
Broke with her sword four helms, which flew like glass;
No less did Bradamant upon the rest;
But them her spear reduced to other pass.
All touched by that gold lance she overthrew,
Doubling Marphisa's score; yet none she slew.

So those high-minded virgin warriors two,
  Scouring the field in separate courses, made
Huge havoc of the Moors, whom they pursue
  One with couched lance, and one with lifted blade.
Hardly King Agramant his Afric crew
  From flight, beneath his royal banners stayed:
In search of Rodomont, he vainly turned;
Nor tidings of the missing warrior learned.

But, putting this affray some while aside,
  Without a pinnace will I pass the sea.
To them of France so fast I am not tied,
  But that Astolpho should remembered be;
Of the grace given him by his holy guide
  I told erewhile, and told (it seems to me)
Branzardo and the King of Algaziers
Against the Duke had mustered all their spears.

Such as the monarchs could in haste engage,
  Raked from all Africa, that host contained;
Whether of fitting or of feeble age;
  Scarce from impressing women they refrained.
Resolved his thirst of vengeance to assuage,
  Agramant twice his Africa had drained.
Few people in the land were left, and they
A feeble and dispirited array.

So proved they; for the foe was scarce in view,
  Before that levy broke in panic dread:
Like sheep, their quailing bands Astolpho slew,
  Charging at his more martial squadron's head;
And with the slain filled all that champaign; few
  Into Biserta from the carnage fled.
A prisoner valiant Bucifar remained;
The town in safety King Branzardo gained.

Astolpho leading such a countless band
  As might have well seven Africas opprest,
And recollecting 'twas the saint's command
  Who upon him whilere imposed the quest,
That fair Provence and Aquamorta's strand
  He from the reaving Saracen should wrest,
Made through his numerous host a second draught
Of such as least inapt for sea he thought;

And filling next as full as they could be
  His hands with many different sorts of leaves.
Plucked from palm, olive, bay and cedar tree,
  Approached the shore, and cast them on the waves.
O blessed souls! O great felicity!
  O grace! which rarely man from God receives;
O strange and wondrous miracle. which sprung
Out of those leaves upon the waters flung!

They wax in number beyond all esteem;
Becoming crooked and heavy, long and wide,
Into hard timber turn and solid beam,
The slender veins that branch on either side;
Taper the masts, and, moored in the salt stream,
All in a thought transformed to vessels, ride;
And of as diverse qualities appear,
As are the plants whereon they grew whilere.

Twenty-six thousand were the troops that manned
Those ready barks of every sort and kind.
To Dudon's government, by sea or land
A leader sage, the navy was consigned;
Which yet lay anchored off the Moorish strand,
Expecting a more favorable wind
To put to sea; when, freighted with a load
Of prisoners, lo! a vessel made the road.

She carried those whom at the bridge of dread—
On that so narrow place of battle met—
Rodomont took, as often has been said.
The valiant Olivier was of the set,
Orlando's kin, and, with them, prisoners led,
Were faithful Brandimart and Sansonet,
With more; to tell whereof there is no need;
Of German, Gascon, or Italian seed.

King Otho's son kind welcome did afford
Unto those Christian cavaliers, as said
Who, honored at his hospitable board,
With arms and all things needful were purveyed,
His going, for their sake, the Danish lord
Deferred who deemed his voyage well delayed,
To parley with those peers, though at the cost
Of one or two good days, in harbor lost.

Of Charles, and in what state, what order are
The affairs of France they gave advices true;
Told where he best could disembark, and where
To most advantage of the Christian crew.
While so the cavaliers their news declare,
A noise is heard, which ever louder grew,
Followed by such a fierce alarm withal,
As to more fears than one gave rise in all.

The Duke Astolpho and the goodly throng,
That in discourse with him were occupied,
Armed in a moment, on their coursers sprung,
And hurried where the Nubians loudest cried;
And seeking wherefore that wide larum rung,
Now here, now there, those warlike lords espied
A savage man, and one so strong of hand,
Naked and sole he troubled all that band.

The naked savage whirled a sapling round,
So hard, so heavy, and so strong of grain,
That every time the weapon went to ground,
Some warrior, more than maimed, oppressed the plain.
More than a hundred dead are strewed around;
Nor more defense the routed bands maintain,
Save that a war of distant darts they try,
For there is none will wait the champion nigh.

Astolpho, Brandimart, the Danish knight,
Hastening toward that noise with Olivier,
Remain astounded at the wondrous might
And courage that in that wild man appear.
When, posting thither on a palfrey light,
Is seen a damsel clad in sable gear.
To Brandimart in haste that lady goes,
And both her arms about the warrior throws.

This was fair Flordelice, whose bosom so
Burned with the love of Monodantes' son,
She, when they left him prisoner to his foe
At that straight bridge, had nigh distracted gone.
From France had she passed hither, given to know,
By that proud paynim, who the deed had done,
How Brandimart, with many cavaliers,
Was prisoner in the city of Algiers.

The gentle baron no less gladly eyed
His faithful and beloved consort's face—
Her whom he prized above all things beside—
And clipt and welcomed her with loving grace;
Nor his warm wishes would have satisfied
A first, a second, or a third embrace,
But that he spied Bardino, he that came
From France together with that faithful dame.

He stretched his arms, and would embrace the knight
And wherefore he was come would bid him say;
But was prevented by the sudden flight
Of the scared host, which fled in disarray,
Before the club of that mad, naked wight,
Who with the brandished sapling cleared his way.
Flordelice viewed the furious man in front;
And cried to Brandimart, "Behold the Count!"

So grieve and so lament the greater part
Of those good warriors, that their eyes o'erflow.
"'Tis time," Astolpho cried, "to find some art
To heal him, not indulge in useless woe,"
And from his courser sprang. Bold Brandimart,
Olivier, Sansonet and Dudon so
All leap to ground, and all together make
At Roland, whom the warriors fain would take.

Seeing the circle round about him grow,
Levels his club that furious paladin,
And makes fierce Dudon feel (who, couched below
His buckler, on the madman would break in)
How grievous is that staff's descending blow;
And but that Olivier, Orlando's kin,
Broke in some sort its force, that stake accurst
Had shield and helmet, head and body burst.

It only burst the shield, and in such thunder
Broke on the casque that Dudon pressed the shore;
With that, Sir Sansonet cut clean asunder
The sapling, shorn of two cloth-yards and more,
So vigorous was that warrior's stroke, while under
His bosom, Brandimart girt Roland sore
With sinewy arms about his body flung;
And to the champion's legs Astolpho clung.

Orlando shook himself, and England's knight,
Ten paces off, reversed upon the ground;
Yet loosed not Brandimart, who with more might
And better hold had clasped the madman round.
To Olivier, too forward in that fight,
He dealt so furious and so fell a wound,
With his clenched fist, that pale the Marquis fell
And purple streams from eyes and nostrils well;

Dudon Orlando from behind embraced,
And with his foot the furious peer would throw;
Astolpho and others seize his arms; but waste
Their strength in all attempts to hold the foe.
Who has not seen a bull by mastiffs chased
That gore his bleeding ears, in fury low,
Dragging the dogs that bait him there and here,
Yet from their tusks unable to get clear.

Olivier many a hawser made them bring,
And running knots in them he quickly tied;
Which on the Count's waist, arms, and legs, they fling,
And then among themselves the ends divide,
Conveyed to this or that amid the ring,
Compassing Roland upon every side.
The warriors thus Orlando flung perforce,
As farrier throws the struggling ox or horse.

As soon as down, they all upon him are,
And hands and feet more tightly they constrain:
He shakes himself, and plunges here and there;
But all his efforts for relief are vain.
Astolpho bade them hence the prisoner bear;
For he would heal, he said, the warrior's brain.
Shouldered by sturdy Dudon is the load,
And on the beach's farthest brink bestowed.

Seven times Astolpho makes them wash the knight;
And seven times plunged beneath the brine he goes.
So that they cleanse away the scurf and blight,
Which to his stupid limbs and visage grows.
This done, with herbs, for that occasion dight,
They stop his mouth, wherewith he puffs and blows,
For, save his nostrils, would Astolpho leave
No passage whence the Count might air receive.

Valiant Astolpho had prepared the vase
Wherein Orlando's senses were contained,
And to his nostrils in such mode conveys
That, drawing in his breath, the County drained
The mystic cup withal. Oh, wondrous case!
The unsettled mind its ancient seat regained;
And, in its glorious reasonings, yet more clear
And lucid waxed his wisdom than whilere.

As one that seems in troubled sleep to see
Abominable shapes, a horrid crew—
Monsters which are not, and which cannot be—
Or seems some strange, unlawful thing to do,
Yet marvels at himself, from slumber free,
When his recovered senses play him true,
So good Orlando, when he is made sound,
Remains yet full of wonder, and astound.

Then said, as erst Silenus said—when seen,
And taken sleeping in the cave of yore—
Solvite me, with visage so serene,
With look so much less wayward than before,
That him they from his bonds delivered clean,
And raiment to the naked warrior bore;
All comforting their friend, with grief opprest,
For that delusion which had him possest.

When to his former self he was restored,
Of wiser and of manlier mind than e'er,
From love as well was freed the enamored lord;
And she, so gentle deemed, so fair whilere,
And by renowned Orlando so adored,
Did but to him a worthless thing appear.
What he through love had lost, to reacquire
Was his whole study, was his whole desire.

The order taken to attack the town
Of huge Biserta, when, and on what side;
How, at the first assault, the walls are won,
And with Orlando who the palm divide,
Lament not that I now shall leave unshown,
Since for short time I lay my tale aside.
In the mean while, how fierce an overthrow
The Moors received in France, be pleased to know.

Well nigh abandoned was their royal lord
In his worst peril; for to Arles again
Had gone, with many of the paynim horde,
The sage Sobrino and the King of Spain;
Who, for they deemed the land unsafe, aboard
Their barks sought refuge, with a numerous train,
Barons and cavaliers, that served the Moor;
Who, moved by their example, put from shore.

Yet royal Agramant the fight maintains;
But when he can no longer make a stand,
Turns from the combat, and directly strains
For Arles, not far remote, upon the strand.
Him Rabican pursues, with flowing reins,
Whom Aymon's daughter drives with heel and hand.
Him would she slay, through whom so often crost,
That martial maid had her Rogero lost.

Marphisa by the same desire was stirred,
Who had her thoughts on tardy vengeance placed,
For her dead sire; and as she fiercely spurred,
Made her hot courser feel his rider's haste.
But neither martial maid, amid that herd
Of flying Moors, so well the monarch chased
As to o'ertake him in his swift retreat,
First into Arles, and then aboard his fleet.

And yet they halt not, but in fury go
Amid that crowd, which flies, possessed with dread;
Felling, now here, now there, at every blow,
Many that never more uprear their head.
To evil pass was brought the broken foe:
For safety was not even for them that fled:
Since Agramant a sure retreat to gain,
Bade shut the city gate, which faced the plain.

Meanwhile his heavy ships of deepest draught
King Agramant had made put forth to sea,
Leaving some barks in port—his lightest craft—
For them that would aboard his navy flee.
He stays two days, while they the stragglers waft,
And, for the winds are wild and contrary,
On the third day, to sail he gives command,
In trust to make return to Afric's land.

Royal Marsilius, in that fatal hour,
Fearing the costs will fall upon his Spain,
And that the clouds, which big with tempest lower,
In the end will burst upon his fields and grain,
Makes for Valentia, where he town and tower
Begins to fortify with mickle pain,
And for that war prepares, which after ends
In the destruction of himself and friends.

King Agramant his sails for Afric bent:
  His barks ill-armed and almost empty go;
Empty of men, but full of discontent,
  In that three fourths had perished by the foe.
As cruel some, as weak and proud some shent
  Their king, and (as still happens in like woe)
All hate him privily; but, for they fear
His fury, in his presence mute appear.

Not yet to him have tidings been conveyed,
  That squadrons of great force the billows plough,
Nor would he have believed in him who said,
  A hundred barks had sprung from one small bough;
And hence for Africa the King had weighed,
  Not fearing to encounter hostile prow;
Nor has he watchmen in his tops to spy,
And make report of what they hence descry.

'Twas so those ships, by England's peer supplied
  To Dudon, manned with good and armed crew,
Which see the Moorish fleet at eventide,
  And that strange armament forthwith pursue,
Assailed them unawares, and, far and wide,
  Among those barks their grappling-irons threw,
And, linked by chains, to their opponents clung,
When known for Moors and foemen by their tongue.

In bearing down, impelled by winds that blow
  Propitious to the Danish chief's intent,
Those weighty ships so shocked the paynim foe,
  That many vessels to the bottom went;
Then, taxing wits and hands, to work them woe,
  Them with fire, sword, and stones the Christians shent;
Which on their ships in such wide ruin pour,
Like tempest never vext the sea before.

Bold Dudon's men, to whom unwonted might
  And daring were imparted from on high—
Since the hour was come the paynims to requite
  For more than one ill deed—from far and nigh
The Moors so pestilently gall and smite,
  Agramant finds no shelter; from the sky
Above, thick clouds of whistling arrows strike;
Around gleam hook and hatchet, sword and pike.

The King hears huge and heavy stones descend,
  From charged machine or thundering engine sent,
Which, falling, poop and prow and broadside rend,
  Opening to ravening seas a mighty vent;
And more than all the furious fires offend,
  Fires that are quickly kindled, slowly spent.
The wretched crews would fain that danger shun,
And ever into direr peril run.

CANTO XXVIII

King Agramant into a boat descends,
With Brigliador and precious things, to flee;
And so, 'twixt ship and ship, in silence wends,
Until he finds himself in safer sea,
Far from his own; whom fiery Dudon shends,
Reduced to sad and sore extremity;
Them steel destroys, fires burn, and waters drown;
While he, that mighty slaughter's cause, is flown.

Agramant flies, and with him old Sobrine,
Agramant grieving he had not believed,
What time that sage foresaw with eye divine,
And told the woe wherewith he is aggrieved.
But turn we to the valiant paladine,
Who, before other aid can be received,
Counsels the Duke Biserta to destroy,
That it no more may Christian France annoy.

And hence in public order was it said,
The camp should to its arms the third day stand;
For this, it was with many barks bestead;
For all were placed not at the Dane's command.
That fleet the worthy Sansonnetto led
(As good a warrior he by sea as land),
Which a mile off the port, and overright
Biserta, now was anchored by the knight.

Washed by the sea, upon two quarters, were
The city walls, two stood on the dry shore,
Of a construction excellent and rare,
Wherein was seen the work of days of yore;
Of other bulwarks was the town nigh bare;
For since Branzardo there the scepter bore,
Few masons at command, and little space
That monarch had to fortify the place.

The Nubian King is charged by England's peer,
With sling and arrow so the Moors to gall
That none upon the works shall dare appear;
And that, protected by the ceaseless fall
Of stone and dart, in safety cavalier
And footman may approach the very wall;
Who loaded, some with plank, with rock-stone some,
And some with beam, or weightier burden, come.

This and that other thing the Nubians bore,
And by degrees filled up that channel wide,
Whose waters were cut off the day before,
So that in many parts the ooze was spied.
Filled is the ditch in haste from shore to shore,
And forms a level to the farther side.
Cheering the footmen on the works to mount,
Stand Olivier, Astolpho, and the Count.

The Nubians, upon hope of gain intent,
Impatient of delay, nor heeding how
With pressing perils they were compassed, went
Protected by the sheltering boar and sow.
With battering ram, and other instrument,
To break the gate, and make the turret bow,
Speedily to the city wall they post,
Nor unprovided find the paynim host.

For steel, and fire, and roof, and turret there,
In guise of tempest on the Nubians fell,
Which plank and beam from those dread engines tear
Made for annoyance of the infidel.
In the ill beginning, and while dim the air,
Much injury the christened host befell;
But when the sun from his rich mansion breaks,
Fortune the faction of the Moor forsakes.

The assault is reënforced on every side,
By Count Orlando, both by sea and land;
The fleet, with Sansonetto for its guide,
Entered the harbor, and approached the strand;
And sorely they with various engines plied,
With arrows and with slings, the paynim band;
And sent the assailants scaling-ladder, spear,
And naval stores, and every needful gear.

Orlando, Oliviero, Brandimart,
And he, in air so daring heretofore,
Do fierce and furious battle on that part
Which lies the farthest inland from the shore:
Each leads a portion of those Æthiops swart,
Ordered in equal bands beneath the four,
Who at the walls, the gateways, or elsewhere,
All give of prowess shining proofs, and rare.

So better could be seen each warrior's claim,
Than if confused in combat there and here,
Who of reward is worthy, who of shame,
To a thousand and to watchful eyes is clear.
Dragged upon wheels are towers of wooden frame,
And others well-trained elephants uprear,
Which so o'ertop the turrets of the foe,
Those bulwarks stand a mighty space below.

Brandimart to the walls a ladder brought,
Climbed, and to climb withal to others cried:
Many succeed, with bold assurance fraught,
For none can fear beneath so good a guide;
Nor was there one who marked, nor one who thought
Of marking, if such weight it would abide.
Brandimart only, on the foes intent,
Clambered and fought, and grasped a battlement.

Here clung with hand and foot the daring knight,
Sprang on the embattled wall, and whirled his sword;
And, showing mickle tokens of his might,
The paynims charged, o'erthrew, hewed-down, and gored.
But all at once, o'erburthened with that weight,
The ladder breaks beneath the assailing horde;
And, saving Brandimart, the Christians all
Into the ditch with headlong ruin fall.

Not, therefore, blenched the valiant cavalier,
Nor thought he of retreat, albeit was none
Of his own band that followed in his rear;
Although he was a mark for all the town.
Of many prayed, the warrior would not hear
The prayer to turn; but mid the foes leaped down;
I say, into the city took a leap,
Where the town-wall was thirty cubits deep.

He without any harm on the hard ground,
As if on feathers or on straw, did light;
And, like cloth shred and shorn, the paynims round
In fury shreds and shears the valiant knight.
Now springs on these, now those, with vigorous bound;
And these and those betake themselves to flight.
They that without have seen the leap he made,
Too late to save him deem all human aid.

Those warriors, and Orlando most of all,
Who love and prize the gentle Brandimart,
Hearing, should they delay upon that call,
They would from so renowned a comrade part,
Their scaling-ladders plant, and mount the wall
With rivalry, which shows the kingly heart;
Who carry all such terror in their look,
That, at the very sight, their foremen shook.

And when those win the wall, they leave a space
So wide, that who beneath their conduct go,
Safely may follow them; for at its base,
A thousand ladders have been reared below.
Meanwhile the battering-rams, in many a place,
Have breached that wall, and with such mighty blow,
The bold assailants can, from many a part,
Bear succor to the gallant Brandimart.

With furious rage rushed in the impetuous band,
Where many breaches in the wall were wrought,
To slay with burning torch and trenchant brand,
That people, which to evil pass were brought.
Murder and rapine there, and violent hand
Dipt deep in blood and plunder, in a thought,
Destroy that sumptuous and triumphant town,
Which of all Afric wore the royal crown.

The victors, laden with their mighty prey,
From that unhappy city's gates are gone,
One with fair vase, and one with rich array,
Or silver plate from ancient altar won.
The mother this, that bore the child away;
Rapes and a thousand evil things were done.
Of much, and what they cannot hinder, hear
Renowned Orlando and fair England's peer.

Agramant, who had left without a guide
His fleet this while, and with Sobrino fled,
Wept over his Biserta when he spied
Those fires that on the royal city fed.
When nearer now the King was certified,
How in that cruel strife his town had sped,
He thought of dying, and himself had slain,
But that Sobrino's words his arm restrain.

"What victory, my lord, (Sobrino cries)
Could better than thy death the Christian cheer,
Whence he might hpoe to joy in quiet wise
Fair Africa, from all annoyance clear?
Thy being yet alive this hope denies;
Hence shall he evermore have cause for fear.
For well the foeman knows, save thou are gone,
He for short time will find thine Afric throne."

Eastward King Agramant had turned his prow;
And seaward steered his bark, of Afric wide;
When from the land a wicked wind 'gan blow,
And took the reeling vessel on one side.
The master, seated at the helm, his brow
Raised toward heaven, and to the monarch cried;
"I see so fell and fierce a tempest form,
"Our pinnace cannot face the pelting storm.

"If you, my lords, will listen to my lore,
An isle is on our left-hand; and to me
It seems that it were well to make that shore
Till overblown the tempest's fury be."
To his advice assents the royal Moor,
And makes the larboard land, from peril free;
Which, for the sailors' weal, when tempests rise,
'Twixt Vulcan's lofty forge and Afric lies.

Here other vessel, sheltered from the main,
They found, by tempest tossed upon that land,
Which had conveyed the King of Sericane
Erewhile from Arles; on one and the other hand,
In reverent wise and worthy of the twain,
Those valiant kings embraced upon the strand;
For friends the monarchs were, and late before
The walls of Paris arms together bore.

With much displeasure Sericana's knight
Heard by King Agramant his griefs displayed,
Then him consoled, and in his cause to fight,
Like courteous king, the kindly offer made;
But brooked not, that to Egypt's people, light
And lacking faith, he should resort for aid.
"That thither it is perilous to wend,
Exiles," he said, "are warned by Pompey's end.

"And for Senapus' Æthiopian crew
Have come beneath Astolpho, as ye show
To wrest your fruitful Africa from you,
And burnt and laid her chiefest city low.
And with their squadrons is Orlando, who
Was wandering void of wit, short while ago,
The fittest cure for all, whereby to scape
Out of this trouble I, meseems, can shape.

"I, for your love, will undertake the quest,
The Count in single combat to appeal;
He vainly would, I wot, with me contest,
If wholly made of copper or of steel.
I rate the Christian church, were he at rest,
As wolf rates lambs, when hungering for his meal.
Next have I thought how of the Nubian band,
A brief and easy task, to free your land.

"I will make other Nubians, they that hold
Another faith, divided by Nile's course,
And Arabs and Macrobians (rich in gold
And men are these, and those in herds of horse),
Chaldæan, Perse, and many more, controlled
By my good scepter, in such mighty force,
Will make them war upon the Nubians' reign,
Those reavers shall not in your land remain."

Gradasso's second offer seemed to be
Most opportune to King Troyano's son;
And much he blessed the chances of the sea,
Which him upon that desert isle had thrown:
Yet would not upon any pact agree
—Nay, not to repossess Biserta's town—
Gradasso should for him in fight contend;
Deeming too sore his honor 'twould offend.

"If Roland is to be defied, more due
The battle is to me," that King replies,
"I am prepared for it; and let God do
His will by me, in good or evil wise."
"Follow my mode; another mode and new,
Which comes into my mind," Gradasso cries,
Let both of us together wage this fight
Against Orlando and another knight."

"So not left out, I care not, if I be
The first or last," said Agramant; "I know
In arms no better can I find than thee,
Though I should seek a comrade, high or low."
"And what," Sobrino cried, "becomes of me?
I should be more expert if old in show;
And evermore in peril it is good,
Force should have Counsel in his neighborhood."

Stricken in years, yet vigorous was the sage,
And well had proved himself with sword and spear;
And said, he found himself in gray old age,
Such as in green and supple youth whilere.
They own his claim, and for an embassage
Forthwith a courier find, then bid him steer
For Africa, where camped the Christians lie,
And Count Orlando on their part defy;

With equal number of armed knights to be,
Matching his foes, on Lampedosa's shore;
Where on all quarters that circumfluent sea,
By which they are inisled, is heard to roar.
The paynim messenger unceasingly,
Like one in needful haste, used sail and oar,
Till he found Roland in Biserta, where
The host beneath his eye their plunder share.

From those three monarchs to the cavalier
The invitation was in public told;
So pleasing to Anglante's valiant peer,
To the herald he was liberal of his gold;
From his companions had he heard whilere
That Durindane was in Gradasso's hold;
Hence, to retrieve that falchion from the foe,
To India had the Count resolved to go.

He chose for his companions in the fight
The faithful Brandimart and Olivier.
Well has he proved the one and the other's might;
Knows he alike to both is passing dear.
Good horses and good armor seeks the knight,
And goodly swords and lances, far and near,
For him and his; meseems to you is known
How none of those three warriors had his own.

What could be had of armor, rusted o'er
And brown with age, Orlando bids unite;
Meanwhile with his companions on the shore,
He walks, discoursing on the future fight.
So wandering from their camp three miles and more
It chanced that, turning toward the sea their sight,
Under full sail approaching, they descried
A helmless barque, with nought her course to guide.

Meanwhile a servant of the childe's, at hand—
  Faithful, expert and wary was the wight,
Nor in the shock of either furious band
  Had ever of his warlike lord lost sight—
To bold Rogero bore his horse and brand,
  That he might aid his comrades now in flight.
Rogero backed the steed and grasped the sword;
But not in battle mixed that martial lord.

From all he hears repeated, far and near,
  That Agramant had broke the promise plight.
He loves that King, and from his side to veer,
  For this, believes would be no error light.
The Moors were broke and scattered (this whilere
  Has been rehearsed) and from the giddy height
Of her revolving wheel were downward hurled,
Who at her pleasure rolls this nether world.

Rogero ponders if he should remain,
  Or rather should his sovereign lord attend.
Love for his lady fits him with a rein
  And bit, which lets him not to Afric wend;
Wheels him, and to a counter course again
  Spurs him, and threats his restive mood to shend.
Save he maintains the treaty, and the troth
Pledged to the paladin with solemn oath.

He all that day and the ensuing night
  Remains alone, and so the following day;
Forever sifting in his doubtful sprite
  If it be better to depart or stay.
Lastly for Agramant decides the knight
  To him in Afric will he wend his way,
Moved by his love for his liege lady sore,
But moved by honor and by duty more.

He made for Arles, where yet he hoped would ride
  The fleet that him to Africa might bear;
Nor in the port nor offing ships espied,
  Nor Saracens save dead beheld he there.
For Agramant had swept the roadstead wide,
  And burned what vessels in the haven were.
Rogero takes the road, when this hope fails,
Along the sea-beat shore toward Marseilles.

And, when from far the seven ships he spied,
  He thought they were the fleet of Agramant,
And, to know further, pricked his courser's side;
  Then, nearer, mid those knights of mickle vaunt,
Nasamon's king a prisoner he descried,
  Agricalt, Bambirago, Faruant,
Balastro, Manilardo, and Rimedont;
Who stood with weeping eyes and drooping front.

In their unhappy state to leave that crew
  The childe who loved those monarchs, cannot bear.
That useless is the empty hand he knew;
  That where force is not, little profits prayer.
He couched his lance, their keeper overthrew,
  Then proved his wonted might with falchion bare,
And in a moment stretched upon the strand
More than a hundred of the Nubian band.

The noise Sir Dudon hears, the slaughter spies,
  But knows not who the stranger cavalier;
He marks how, put to rout, his people flies,
  With anguish, with lament and mighty fear;
Quickly for courser, shield, and helmet cries
  (Bosom, and arms, and thighs were mailed whilere),
Leaps on his horse, nor, having seized his lance,
Forgets he is a paladin of France.

He called on every one to stand aside,
  And with the galling spur his courser prest;
Meanwhile a hundred other foes have died,
  And filled with hope was every prisoner's breast;
And as Rogero holy Dudon spied
  Approach on horseback (footmen were the rest),
Esteeming him their head, he charged the knight,
Impelled by huge desire to prove his might.

Already, on his part, had moved the Dane;
  But when he saw the childe without a spear,
He flung his own far from him, in disdain
  To take such vantage of the cavalier.
Admiring at Sir Dudon's courteous vein,
  "Belie himself he cannot," said the peer,
"And of those perfect warriors must be one
That as the paladins of France are known.

"If I my will can compass, he shall shew
  His name to me, ere further deed be done."
He made demand; and in the stranger knew
  Dudon, the Danish Ogier's valian son.
He from Rogero claimed an equal due,
  And from the childe as courteous answer won.
Their names on either side announced, the foes
A bold defiance speak, and come to blows.

Bold Dudon had with him that iron mace
  Which won him deathless fame in many a fight,
Wherewith he proved him fully of the race
  Of that good Danish warrior famed for might.
That best of falchions, which through iron case
  Of cuirass or of casque was wont to bite,
Youthful Rogero from the scabbard snatched,
And with the martial Dane his valor matched.

But for the gentle youth was ever willed
To offend his lady-love the least he could,
And knew he should offend her, if he spilled,
In that disastrous battle, Dudon's blood
(Well in the lineage of French houses skilled,
He wist of Beatrice's sisterhood,
—Bradamant's mother she—with Armelline,
The mother of the Danish paladine).

He therefore never thrust in that affray,
And rarely smote an edge on plate and chain.
Now warding off the mace, now giving way
Before the fall of that descending bane,
Turpin believes, it in Rogero lay
Sir Dudon in few sword-strokes to have slain.
Yet never when the Dane his guard foregoes,
Save on the falchion's flat descend the blows.

The Danish warrior was well certified
No wish to slay him had the youthful knight,
Who spared him now, when open was his side;
Now, when so wearied he no more could smite.
When finally he knew, and plain descried,
Rogero scrupled to put forth his might,
If with less vigor and less prowess steeled,
At least in courtesy he would not yield.

"Pardi, sir, make we peace," he said. "Success
In this contention cannot fall to me—
Cannot be mine; for I myself confess
Conquered and captive to thy courtesy."
To him Rogero answered, "And no less
I covet peace than 'tis desired by thee.
But this upon condition, that those seven
Are freed from bondage and to me are given."

With that he showed those seven whereof I spake,
Bound and with drooping heads, a sad array;
Adding, he must to him no hindrance make,
Who would those kings to Africa convey.
And Dudon thus allowed the childe to take
Those seven, and him allowed to bear away
A bark as well; what likes him best he chooses
Amid those vessels, and for Afric looses.

He looses bark and sail; and in bold wise
Trusting the fickle wind, to seaward stood.
At first on her due course the vessel flies,
And fills the pilot full of hardihood.
The beach retreats, and from the sailors' eyes
So fades, the sea appears a shoreless flood.
Upon the darkening of the day, the wind
Displays its fickle and perfidious kind.

In the strained tackle sounds a hollow roar,
  Wherein the struggling wind its fury breaks;
The forked lightning flashes evermore,
  With fearful thunder heaven's wide concave shakes.
One to the rudder runs, one grasps an oar;
  Each to his several office him betakes.
One will make fast, another will let go;
Water into the water others throw.

On a despiteous sea, that livelong night,
  They drifted, as the wind in fury blew.
The furious wind that with the dawning light
  Should have abated, gathered force anew.
Lo! a bare rock, ahead, appears in sight,
  Which vainly would the wretched band eschew;
Whom toward that cliff, in their despite, impel
The raging tempest and the roaring swell.

Three times and four the pale-faced pilot wrought
  The tiller with a vigorous push to sway;
And for the bark a surer passage sought:
  But the waves snapt and bore the helm away.
To lower or ease the bellying canvas aught
  The sailors had no power! nor time had they
To mend that ill, or counsel what was best;
For them too hard the mortal peril prest.

Perceiving now that nothing can defend
  Their bark from wreck on that rude rock and bare,
All to their private aims alone attend,
  And only to preserve their life have care.
Who quickest can, into the skiff descend,
  But in a thought so overcrowded are,
Through those so many who invade the boat,
That, gunwale-deep, she scarce remains afloat.

Rogero, on beholding master, mate,
  And men abandoning the ship with speed,
In doublet, as he is, sans mail and plate,
  Hopes in the skiff a refuge in that need,
But finds her overcharged with such a weight,
  And afterward so many more succeed,
That the o'erwhelming waves the pinnace drown,
And she with all her wretched freight goes down;

Himself with hands and feet the warrior rows,
  Hoping by force thereof to win the shore;
Breasts boldly the importunate flood, and blows
  With his unwearied breath the foam before.
Waxing meanwhile, the troubled water rose,
  And from the rock the abandoned vessel bore;
Quitted of those unhappy men, who die
(So cursed their lot) the death from which they fly,

The ship that drifted wildly with her guide,
Without him, made directly Afric's strand,
Two or three miles of waste Biserta wide,
Upon the quarter facing Egypt's land;
And, as the sea went down and the wind died,
Stood bedded in that weary waste of sand.
Now thither Roland roved, who paced the shore;
As I in other strain rehearsed before.

And willing to discover, if alone,
Laden, or light, the stranded vessel were,
He, Olivier, and Monodantes' son,
Aboard her in a shallow bark repair:
Beneath the hatchways they descend, but none
Of human kind they see; and only there
Find good Frontino, with the trenchant sword
And gallant armor of his youthful lord,

Who was so hurried in his hasty flight
He had not even time to take his sword—
To Orlando known, which, Balisarda hight,
Was his erewhile. The tale's upon record,
And ye have read it all, as well I write;
How Falerina lost it to that lord,
When waste as well her beauteous bowers he laid;
And how from him Brunello stole the blade;

Now, for of harness he had little need,
Charmed, and against all weapons fortified,
To Olivier he left the warlike weed,
Not so the sword, which to his waist he tied.
To Brandimart Orlando gave the steed,
Thus equally that spoil would he divide
With his companions twain, in equal share,
Who partners in that rich discovery were.

The warriors to the wind their canvas rear,
When point device the three accoutred are.
Bold Sansonet is left, with England's peer,
Intrusted with the faithful army's care.
Flordelice, pricked at heart with cruel fear,
Filling the heavens with vow, lament and prayer,
As far as they by sight can followed be,
Follows their sails upon the foaming sea.

Orlando then debarks, with his array,
His kinsman Olivier and Brandimart;
Who on the side that fronts the eastern ray,
Encamp them, and not haply without art.
King Agramant arrives that very day,
And tents him opposite nor far apart.
But, for the sun is sinking fast, forborne
Is their encounter till the following morn.

When the first whitening of the dawn was seen,
Armed, in a moment leapt on horseback all.
Short parley passed the puissant foes between.
There was no stop; there was no interval;
For they have laid in rest their lances keen,
But I into too foul a fault should fall
Meseems, my lord, if, while their deeds I tell,
I let Rogero perish in the swell.

All others that had plunged into the flood,
In the end, o'erwhelmed by those wild waters, died.
Rogero, as to Providence seemed good,
Mounted the solitary islet's side.
When safe upon the barren rock he stood,
A new alarm the stripling terrified—
To be within those narrow bounds confined,
And die, with hardship and with hunger pined.

Yet he with an unconquered heart, intent
To suffer with the heavens for him ordained,
O'er those hard stones, against that steep ascent,
Toward the top with feet intrepid strained;
And not a hundred yards had gone, when, bent
With years, and with long fasts and vigil stained,
He worthy of much worship one espied,
In hermit's weed, descend the mountain's side,

Who cries, on his approaching him, "Saul, Saul,
"Why persecutest thou my faithful seed?"
As whilom said the Saviour to Saint Paul,
When (blessed stroke!) he smote him from his steed.
"Thou thought'st to pass the sea, nor pay withal;
Thought'st to defraud the pilot of his meed.
Thou seest that God has arms to reach and smite,
When farthest off thou deem'st that God of might."

That anchoret pursues, and does upbraid
Rogero first, and comforts finally;
Upbraideth him, because he had delayed
Beneth that easy yoke to bend the knee;
And what he should have done, when whilom prayed
And called on Christ—then uncompelled and free—
Had done with little grace; nor turned to God
Until he saw him threatening with the rod.

Then comforts him—that Christ aye heaven allows
To them that late or early heaven desire;
And all those laborers of the Gospel shows,
Paid by the vineyard's lord with equal hire.
With charity and warm devotion glows,
And him instructs the venerable sire,
As toward the rocky cell where he resides
He with weak steps and slow Rogero guides.

That hermit lit a fire, and heaped the board
With different fruits, within his small repair;
Wherewith the childe somedeal his strength restored,
When he had dried his clothes and dripping hair.
After, at better ease, to him God's word
And mysteries of our faith expounded were,
And the day following, in his fountain clear,
That anchoret baptized the cavalier.

There dwells the young Rogero, well content
With what the rugged sojourn does allow;
In that the friar showed shortly his intent
To send him where he fain would turn his prow.
Meanwhile with him he many an argument
Handles and often; of God's kingdom now;
Now of things appertaining to his case;
Now to Rogero's blood, a future race.

Meanwhile Orlando and bold Brandimart,
With that good knight, the Marquis Olivier,
Against the paynim Mars together start
(Name well befitting Sericana's peer);
And the other two—that from the adverse part
At more than a foot-pace their coursers steer;
I say King Agramant and King Sobrine:
The pebbly beach resounds, and rolling brine.

Bayardo shocked the steed of lesser might,
Backed by Orlando, with such might and main,
He made that courser stagger left and right,
And measure next his length upon the plain.
Vainly to raise him strove Anglantes' knight
Thrice, nay four times, with rowels and with rein;
Balked of his end, he lights upon the field,
Draws Balisarda, and uplifts his shield.

With Agramant encounters Olivier,
Who, fitly matched, their foaming coursers gall.
Bold Brandimart unhorsed in the career
Sobrino; but it was not plain withal
If 'twas the fault of horse or cavalier;
For seldom good Sobrino used to fall.
Was it his courser's or his own misdeed,
Sobrino found himself without a steed.

Now Brandimart, that upon earth descried
The King Sobrine, assailed no more his man;
But at Gradasso, who Anglantes' pride
Had equally unhorsed, in fury ran.
On Agramant and Oliviero's side,
Meanwhile, the warfare stood as it began;
When broken on their bucklers were the spears,
With swords encountered the returning peers.

Roland, who saw Gradasso in such guise
As showed that to return he little cared,
Nor can return; so Brandimart aye plies,
And presses Sericana's monarch hard,
Turns round, and, like himself, afoot descries
Sobrino, in the doubtful strife unpaired:
At him he sprang; and, at his haughty look,
Heaven, as the warrior trod, in terror shook.

Of such fine steel was Balisarda's blade,
That arms against it little shelter were;
And by a person of such puissance swayed,
By Roland, single in the world or rare,
It splits the shield, and is in nowise stayed,
Though bound about with steel the edges are;
It splits the shield, and to the bottom rends,
And on the shoulder underneath descends.

Upon the shoulder; nor, though twisted chain
And double plates encase the paynim foe,
These hinder much that sword of stubborn grain
From opening wide the parted flesh below.
Sobrino at Orlando smites; but vain
Against the valiant Count is every blow;
To whom, for special grace, the King of Heaven
A body charmed aginst all arms had given.

The valorous Count, redoubling still his blows,
Thought from the trunk the monarch's head to smite.,
Sobrino, who the strength of Clearmont knows,
And how the shield ill boots, retired from fight,
Yet not so far but that upon his brows
Fell the dread falchion of Anglantes' knight;
'Twas on its flat, but such his might and main,
It crushed the helm and stupefied the brain.

Orlando had left Sobrano (as I said)
On earth, and against Sericana's pride,
Desirous valiant Brandimart to aid
Even as he was, afoot, in fury hied:
When, prompt to assail Gradasso with the blade,
He, loose and walking in mid field, espied
The goodly horse, which had Sobrino thrown;
And bound him straight to make the steed his own.

He seized the horse (for none the deed gainsaid),
And took a leap, and vaulted on his prize.
This hand the bridle grasped, and that the blade.
Orlando's motions good Gradasso spies;
Nor at his coming is the King dismayed;
Who by his name the paladin defies;
With him, and both his partners in the fight,
He hopes to make it dark before 'tis night.

Leaving his foe, he, facing Brava's lord,
Thrust at the collar of his shirt of mail,
All else beside the flesh, the falchion bored;
To pierce through which would every labor fail.
At the same time descends Orlando's sword
(Where Balisarda bites, no spells avail),
Shears helmet, cuirass, shield and all below,
And cleaves whate'er it rakes with headlong blow.

While so the fight is balanced 'mid those foes,
Sobrino, that on earth long time had lain,
When to himself he was returned, uprose,
In face and shoulder suffering grevious pain.
He lifts his face, his eyes about him throws;
And thither, where more distant on the plain
He sees his leader, with long paces steers
So stealthily, that none his coming hears.

He on the Marquis came, who had but eyes
For Agramant, and in the warrior's rear,
Wounded upon the hocks in such fierce wise
The courser of unheeding Olivier,
That he falls headlong; and beneath him lies
His valient master, nor his foot can clear,
His left foot, which in that unthought-for woe,
Was in the stirrup jammed his steed below.

Sobrine pursued, and with back-handed blow
Thought he his head should from his neck have shorn;
But this forbids that armor, bright of show,
By Vulcan hammered, and by Hector worn.
Brandimart sees his risk, and at the foe
Is by his steed, with flowing bridle, borne.
Sobrino on the head he smote and flung;
But straight from earth that fierce old man upsprung,

And turned anew to Olivier, to speed
The warrior's soul more promptly on its way;
Or at the least that baron to impede,
And him beneath his courser keep at bay.
Bold Olivier, whose better arm was freed,
And with his sword could fend him as he lay,
Meanwhile so smites and lunges, there and here,
That at sword's length he holds the ancient peer.

Brandimart has found out the royal Moor,
And storms about the paynim cavalier;
Upon Frontino, like a lathe, before,
Beside, or whirling in the warrior's rear
A goodly horse the Christian champion bore,
Nor worse the southern king's in the career;
That Brigliador, Rogero's gift he crost,
Erewhile by haughty Mandricardo lost.

Gradasso has Orlando half disarmed;
Atop and on both sides his helm has broke;
Fallen is his shield, his cuirass split, but harmed
The warrior is not by the furious stroke,
Which opened plate and mail; for he is charmed;
And worser vengeance on the King has wroke,
In face, throat, breast has gored that cavalier,
Besides the wounds whereof I spake whilere.

Gradasso, desperate when he descried
Himself all wet, and smeared with sanguine dye,
And Roland, all from head to foot espied,
After such mighty strokes unstained and dry,
Thinking head, breast, and belly to divide,
With both his hands upheaved his sword on high;
And, even as he devised, upon the front,
Smote with mid blade Anglantes' haughty Count.

And would by any other so have done—
Would to the saddle-tree have cleft him clean;
But the good sword, as if it fell upon
Its flat, rebounds again, unstained and sheen.
The furious stroke astounded Milo's son,
By whom some scattered stars on earth were seen.
He drops the bridle and would drop the brand,
But that a chain secures it to his hand.

Gradasso then beholds the royal Moor
To the utmost peril in that battle brought;
For by the shining helmet which he wore,
With the left hand, him Brandimart had caught;
Already had unlaced and casque before,
And with his dagger would new ill have wrought;
Nor much defence could make the Moorish lord;
For Brandimart as well had reft his sword.

Gradasso turned, nor more Orlando sought,
But hastened where he Agramant espied.
The incautious Brandimart, suspecting nought
Orlando would have let him turn aside,
Had not Gradasso in his eyes or thought,
And to the paynim's throat his knife applied.
Gradasso came, and at his helmet laid,
Wielding with either hand his trenchant blade.

An iron ring that girt his helmet round,
Two inches thick, was broke by that fell blow,
And cleft; and with the solid iron bound,
Was parted the good cap of steel below.
Bold Brandimart, reversed upon the ground,
With haggard face beside his horse lies low;
And issuing widely from the warrior's head
A stream of life-blood dyes the shingle red.

Come to himself, the County turns his eye,
And sees his Brandimart upon the plain,
And in such act Gradasso standing by
As clearly shows by whom the knight was slain.
If he most raged or grieved I know not, I,
But such short time is left him to complain,
His hasty wrath breaks forth, his grief gives way;
But now 'tis time that I suspend my lay.

CANTO XXIX

To end: I say that other rage is none
Which can be weighed with that in equal wise,
Which kindles, when an injury is done
To kinsman, friend, or lord before our eyes.
Then justly in Orlando's heart, for one
So dear to him, might sudden fury rise;
When him he saw, extended on the sand,
Slain by the stroke of fierce Gradasso's brand.

As nomad swain, who darting on its way
In slippery line the horrid snake has seen,
That his young son, amid the sands at play,
Has killed with venomed tooth, inflamed with spleen,
Grasps his baton, the poisonous worm to slay—
His sword, than every other sword more keen,
So, in his fury grasped Anglantes' knight,
And wreaked on Agramant his first despite.

Scaped, bleeding, with helm loosened from his head,
With half a shield and swordless, through his mail,
Sore wounded in more places than is said,
As from the dull or envious falcon's nail,
Escapes the unhappy sparrowhawk, half dead,
With ruffled plumage and with loss of tail,
On him Orlando came, and smote him just
Where with the helmed head conjoined the bust.

Loosed was the helm, the neck without its band;
So, like a rush, was severed by the sword.
Down fell, and shook its last upon the sand,
The heavy trunk of Libya's mighty lord.
His spirit, which flitted to the Stygian strand,
Charon with crooked boat-hook dragged aboard.
On him Orlando wastes no further pain,
But, sword in hand, seeks him of Sericane.

As the headless trunk of Afric's cavalier
Extended on the shore Gradasso viewed
(What never had befallen him whilere),
He shook at heart, a troubled visage shewed
And at the coming of Anglantes' peer,
Presageful of his fate, appears subdued;
Nor seeks he means of fence against his foe,
When fierce Orlando deals the fatal blow.

Orlando levels at his better side,
Beneath the lowest rib, his falchion bright;
And crimsoned to the hilt, a hand-breadth wide
Of the other flank, the sword appears in sight;
And well his mighty puissance testified,
And spoke him as the strongest living knight,
That stroke, by which a warrior was undone,
Better than whom in Paynimry was none.

Warlike Sabrino, of much blood bereaved,
Which from his flank and wounded visage rained,
Long since had fallen, reversed and sore aggrieved,
And had by now his vessels well nigh drained.
Olivier too lies stretched; nor has retrieved,
Nor can retrieve, his crippled foot, save sprained,
And almost crushed; so long, between the plain
And his stout courser jammed, the limb has lain.

And but Orlando helped (so woe-begone
Was weeping Olivier, and brought so low)
He could not have released his limb alone;
And, when released, endures such pain, such woe,
The helpless warrior cannot stand upon,
Or shift withal his wounded foot, and so
Benumbed and crippled is the leg above,
That he without assistance cannot move.

The victory brought Orlando small delight;
On whom too heavily and hardly weighed
Of slaughter Brandimart the piteous sight;
Nor sure of Oliviero's life he made.
Sobrino still survived; but little light
The wounded monarch had, amid much shade;
For almost spent his ebbing life remained,
So fast from him the crimson blood had drained.

The County has him taken, bleeding sore,
Thither, where he is salved with sovereign care;
And he as if a kinsman of the Moor,
Benignly comforts him and speaks him fair;
For in Orlando, when the strife was o'er,
Was nothing evil; ever prompt to spare.
He from the dead their arms and coursers reft,
The rest he to their knaves' disposal left.

Meanwhile his eyes the good Orlando reared,
And saw, on turning them to seaward, where
Under full sail a nimble bark appeared,
As if she to that island would repair.
I will not now rehearse who thither steered;
For more than one awaiteth me elsewhere.
Wend me to France and see if they be glad
At having chased the Saracens, or sad.

See what she does withal, the lady true,
That sees her knight content to wend so wide;
Of the afflicted Bradamant I shew;
After she saw the oath was nullified,
Made in the hearing of those armies two,
Upon the Christian and the paynim side;
Since he again had failed her, there was nought
Wherein she could confide, the damsel thought.

And now her too accustomed plaint and wail
Repeating, of Rogero's cruelty
Fair Bradamant renewed the wonted tale;
She cursed her hard and evil destiny;
Then loosening to tempestuous grief the sail,
Heaven that consented to such perjury—
And did not yet by some plain token speak—
She, in her passion, called unjust and weak.

Behold Rinaldo, whom, as known to you,
Angelica the beauteous loved so well:
Nor him into the amorous fillets drew
So much her beauty as the magic spell.
In peace reposed those other barons true;
For wholly broken was the infidel.
Alone amid the victors, he, of all
The paladins, remained Love's captive thrall.

To seek her he a hundred couriers sent,
And sought as well, himself, the missing maid,
He in the end to Malagigi went,
Who in his need had often given him aid.
To him he told his love, with eyelids bent
On earth, and visage crimsoned o'er; and prayed
That sage magician to instruct him, where
He in the world might find the long-sought fair.

For his reply he craved some small delay,
And with fair hope consoled Mount Alban's knight.
He should be able of the road to say
By which Angelica had sped her flight,
In France or wheresoe'er; then wends his way
Thither where he is wont his imps to cite;
A grot impervious and with mountains walled.
His book he opened, and the spirits called.

Then one he chooses, in love-cases read,
Whom Malagigi to declare requires,
How good Rinaldo's heart, before so dead,
Was now so quickly moved by soft desires;
And of those fountains twain (the demon said)
Whereof one lights, one quenches amorous fires;
And how nought cures the mischief caused by one
But that whose streams in counter current run;

And says, Ridaldo, having drunk whilere
From the love-chasing fountain's mossy urn,
To Angelica, that long had wooed the peer,
Had shown himself so obstinate and stern;
And he, whom after his ill star did steer
To drink of that which makes the bosom burn,
Her whom but just before he loathed above
All reason, by that draught was forced to love.

Him his ill star and cruel fate conveyed
To swallow fire and flame i' the frozen lake;
For nigh at the same time the Indian maid
In the other bitter stream her thirst did slake;
Which in her bosom so all love allayed,
Henceforth she loathed him more than noisome snake;
He loved her, and such love was his, as late
Rinaldo bore her enmity and hate.

Of this strange story fully certified
Was Malagigi by the demon's lore;
Who news as well of Angelique supplied—
How, yielding up herself to a young Moor,
With him embarking on the unstable tide,
She had abandoned Europe's every shore;
And hoisting her bold canvas to the wind,
In Catalonian galley loosed for Ind.

Rinaldo seeking out the sage anew,
For his reply, he would dissuade the knight
From loving more that Indian lady, who
Now waited on a vile barbarian wight,
And was so distant he could ill pursue,
If he would chase the damsel on her flight,
Who must have measured more than half her way
Homeward, with young Medoro to Catay.

In that bold lover no displeasure deep
The journey of Angelica would move;
Nor yet would mar or break the warrior's sleep
To think that he again must eastward rove;
But that a stripling Saracen should reap
The first fruits of that faithless lady's love
In him such passion bred, such heart-ache sore,
He never in his life so grieved before.

No power hath he to make one sole reply;
His heart, his lip, is quivering with disdain;
His tongue no word is able to untie;
His mouth is bitter and 'twould seem with bane.
He flung from the magician suddenly,
And, as by fury stirred and jealous pain,
He, after mighty plaint, and mighty woe,
Resolved anew to eastern realms to go.

License he gets of Pepin's royal son,
Upon the ground, since with his courser dear
To Sericane is King Gradasso gone,
Against the use of gallant cavalier,
Him honor moves the self-same course to run,
In the end he may prevent the paynim peer
From ever vaunting, that with sword and lance
He took him from a paladin of France.

Ever in memory dwells the restless thought,
He might a thousand times have had the fair;
And—mad and obstinate—had, when besought,
A thousand times refused such beauty rare;
And such sweet joy was whilom set at nought,
Such bright, such blessed moments wasted were;
And now he life would gladly give away
To have that damsel but for one short day.

The thought will never from his mind depart,
How for a sorry footpage she could slight—
Flinging their merit and their love apart—
The service of each former loving wight.
Vext by such thought, which racked and rent his heart,
Rinaldo wends toward the rising light.
He the straight road to Rhine and Basle pursued,
Till he arrived in Arden's mighty wood.

When within that adventurous wood has hied
For many a mile Mount Alban's cavalier,
Of lonely farm or lordly castle wide,
Where the rude place was roughest and most drear,
The sky disturbed he suddenly descried,
He saw the sun's dimmed visage disappear,
And spied forth issuing from a cavern hoar
A monster, which a woman's likeness wore.

A thousand lidless eyes are in her head,
She cannot close them, nor, I think, doth sleep.
She listens with as many ears, and, spread
Like hair, about her forethead serpents creep.
Forth issued into day that figure dread
From devilish darkness and the caverned deep.
For tail, a fierce and bigger serpent wound
About her breast, and girt the monster round.

What in a thousand, thousand quests had ne'er
  Befal'n Rinaldo, here befell the knight,
Who, when he sees the horrid form appear,
  Coming to seek him, and prepared for fight,
Feels in his inmost veins such freezing fear,
  As haply never fell on other wight;
Yet wonted daring counterfeits and feigns,
And with a trembling hand the falchion strains.

The monster so the fierce assault did make
  Therein her mastery was well descried,
It might be said; she took a poisonous snake,
  And now on this, now on the other side,
Leapt at the knight; at her Rinaldo strake
  Ever meanwhile with random blows and wide;
With forestroke, backstroke, he assails the foe;
He often smites but never plants a blow.

The monster threw a serpent at his breast,
  That froze his heart beneath its iron case;
Now through the vizor flung the poisonous pest,
  Which crept about his collar and his face.
Dismayed, Rinaldo fled the field, and prest
  With all his spurs his courser through the chase;
But not behind the hellish monster halts,
Who in a thought upon the crupper vaults.

Wend where the warrior will, an-end or wide,
  Ever with him is that accursed Pest;
Nor knows he how from her to be untied,
  Albeit his courser plunges without rest.
Like a leaf quakes his heart within his side,
  Not that the snakes in other mode molest,
But they such horror and such loathing bred,
He shrieks, he groans, and gladly would be dead.

But aid, and in good time, a horseman bore,
  Equipped with arms of beauteous steel and clear.
For crest, a broken yoke the stranger wore;
  Red flames upon his yellow shield appear;
So was the courser's housing broidered o'er
  As the proud surcoat of the cavalier.
His lance he grasped, his sword was in its plac
And at his saddle hung a burning mace.

The stranger horseman, like a warrior bold,
  Where he that hubbub hears, doth thither swoop,
Until he sees the beast, whose snakes enfold
  Rinaldo, linked in many a loathsome loop,
Who sweats at once with heat and quakes with cold,
  Nor can he thrust the monster from his croup.
Arrived the stranger smote her in the flank,
Who on the near side of the courser sank.

But hardly was on earth extended, ere
She rose and shook her snakes in volumed spire.
The knight no more assails her with the spear,
But is resolved to plague the foe with fire.
He grips the mace and thunders in her rear
With frequent blows like tempest in its ire;
Nor leaves a moment to that monster fell
To strike one stroke in answer, ill or well;

And, while he chases her or holds at bay,
Smites her and venges many a foul affront,
Counsels the paladin, without delay,
To take the road that scales the neighboring mount.
He took that proffered counsel and that way,
And without stop, or turning back his front,
Pricked furiously till he was out of sight;
Though hard to clamber was the rugged height.

The stranger, when he to her dark retreat
Had driven from upper light that beast of hell—
Where she herself doth ever gnaw and eat,
While from her thousand eyes tears ceaseless well—
Followed the knight, to guide his wandering feet,
And overtook him on the highest swell;
Then placed himself beside the cavalier,
Him from those dark and gloomy parts to steer.

When him returned beheld Mount Alban's knight,
That countless thanks were due to him, he said,
And that at all times, as a debt of right,
His life should be for his advantage paid.
Of him he next demands how he is hight,
That he may know and tell who brought him aid;
And among worthy warriors, and before
King Charles, exalt his prowess evermore.

The stranger answered: "Let it irk not thee
That I not now my name to thee display;
Ere longer by a yard the shadows be,
This will I signify—a short delay."
Wending together, they a river see
Whose murmurs woo the traveler from his way,
And shepherd-swain, by whiles, to their green brink;
There an oblivion of their love to drink.

My lord, that fountain's chilling stream and clear
Extinguished love. Angelica of yore
Drinking thereof, for good Mount Alban's peer
Conceived that hate she nourished evermore;
And if she once displeased the cavalier,
And he to her such passing hatred bore,
For this no other cause occasion gave,
My lord, save drinking of this chilly wave.

Arriving at that limpid river's side,
The cavalier that with Rinaldo goes,
Reined-in his courser, hot with toil, and cried,
"Here 'twere not ill, meseemeth, to repose."
"It cannot but be well," the peer replied,
"Because, besides that mid-day fiercely glows,
I have so suffered from that hideous Pest,
As sweet and needful shall I welcome rest."

Upon the green sward lit the martial two,
While their loose horses through the forest fed;
And from their brows the burnished helmets threw
On that flowered herbage, yellow, green, and red.
Rinaldo to the liquid crystal flew,
By heat and thirst unto the river sped;
And with one draught of that cold liquor drove
Out of his burning bosom thirst and love.

Whenas Rinaldo, sated with the draught,
Raising his head the stranger knight espied,
And saw that he, repentant, every thought
Of that so frantic love had put aside,
He reared himself, and said with semblance haught
That which he would not say before, and cried:
"Rinaldo, know that I am hight Disdain,
Bound hither but to break thy worthless chain."

Old hate revived upon Rinaldo's side;
Nor he alone unworthy to be wooed
The damsel deemed by pilgrimage so wide
Her half a league he would not have pursued.
Nathless anew Bayardo to bestride
To Sericane would go that warrior good;
As well because his honor him compelled,
As for the talk that he with Charles had held.

He pricked to Basle upon the following day,
Whither the tidings had arrived before:
That Count Orlando was, in martial fray,
To meet Gradasso and the royal Moor:
Nor through Orlando was divulged that say:
But one who crossed from the Sicilian shore,
And thither had, in haste, the journey made,
As certain news, the tidings had conveyed.

Rinaldo had gladly been at Roland's side,
And from that battle far himself doth see:
Every ten miles he changes horse and guide,
And whips and spurs, and makes his courser flee.
He crossed the Rhine at Constance, forward hied,
He traversed Alp, arrived in Italy,
He left Verona, Mantua, in his rear,
And reached and passed the Po, with swift career.

Much toward eve already sloped the sun,
And the first star was glimmering in the sky,
When doubting on the bank if he shall run
Another course, or in some hostel lie
Until the shades of night and vapors dun
Before Aurora's beauteous visage fly,
A cavalier approaching him he viewed,
Who courtesy in face and semblance shewed.

He, after greeting him, if he were tied
In wedlock made in gentle wise demand.
Rinaldo, wondering what the quest implied,
Made answer, "I am bound in nuptial band."
"I joy thereat," the cavalier replied;
Then, that he might this saying understand,
Added, "I pray that you, sir knight, within
"My mansion will this eve be pleased to inn.

"For I will make you see what needs must please
"A wight," pursued the stranger, "that is wed."
Rinaldo, as well that he would take his ease—
By this, with so long posting sore bested—
As that to see and hear strange novelties
By natural desire he still was led,
His offer takes, and enters a new road,
Following that cavalier to his abode.

A bowshot from the way diverged the two,
And a great palace fronting them descried,
Whence squires with blazing lights (a numerous crew)
Issued, and chased the darkness far and wide.
Entering, his eyes around Rinaldo threw,
And saw a place whose like is seldom spied,
Of beauteous fabric, and well ordered plan;
Nor such huge cost befitted private man.

The bed and bower, within, were ready dight;
But—would he take his counsel for his guide—
In comfort might he sleep throughout the night,
And yet advance some miles; "For thou," he cried,
Shalt have a pinnace that with rapid flight
And without risk shall with the current glide.
Therein shalt thou all night pursue thy way,
And on thy journey gain withal a day."

Good seemed that proffer in Rinaldo's eyes,
And to the courteous host large thanks he paid;
Then for the pinnace which that lord supplies,
That waits him with her crew, the warrior made.
Here, at full ease reclined, Rinaldo lies,
While with the stream his frigate is conveyed;
Which, by six oars impelled, flies fast and fair,
And cleaves the water as a bird the air.

As soon as he reclines his weary head,
  Asleep is Mount Albano's cavalier;
Having erewhile that they shall wake him, said,
  As soon as they Ferrara's city near.
Melara lies left of that river's bed,
  Sermide to the right; they in their rear
Next leave Stellata and Figarolo;
Where his two horns are lowered by angry Po.

Of those two horns that which toward Venice goes
  Rinaldo's pilot left, and took the right;
Then the Bodeno passed. Already shows
  Faintly the eastern blue, and fades from sight;
For now Aurora from her basket throws
  All her rich flowers, and paints it red and white;
When viewing the two castles of Tealdo,
Again his head uplifts the good Rinaldo.

"O happy town! whereof," the warrior cried,
  "Spake Malagigi, having, far and near,
The fixt and wandering fires of heaven espied,
  And forced some subject spirit to appear,
To me foretelling that in future tide—
  What time with him I took this way whilere—
Even to such pitch thy glorious fame should rise,
Thou from all Italy wouldst bear the prize."

While thus Rinaldo speaks, so swiftly borne
  By the quick current flies that nimble yawl;
Not to the lure more swiftly makes return
  The falcon, hurrying at his lord's recall.
Thenceforth the right-hand branch of the right horn
  Rinaldo takes; and hid are roof and wall.
St. George recedes; recede from that swift boat
The turrets of Gaibana and of the moat.

When the sun climbed a steeper road, the knight
  Ordered the board with food to be supplied,
Which the good Mantuan landlord overnight
  Took care with largest plenty to provide;
While the fair town, upon the left, from sight
  Retired, and on the right that marish wide.
Argenta is come and gone, with circling walls
And stream into whose bed Santerno falls.

Then was not fair Bastia built, deem I,
  Which little cause of boast affords to Spain
(That there her banner has been raised on high),
  And causes deeper sorrow to Romagne.
Thence in straight line their bark, that seems to fly,
  To the right shore the boatmen drive amain:
Next through a stagnant channel make, that near
Ravenna brings by noon the cavalier.

Though oft of money he had small supply,
Then was the knight so well bestead, he made
The weary rowers, in his courtesy,
A parting present, ere farewell was said.
Here changing horse and guide, to Rimini
Rinaldo rode that very eve, nor stayed
In Montefiore till the night was done;
And well nigh reached Urbino with the sun.

Since here none takes his rein, Rinaldo bends
His course an-end to Cagli; o'er the height,
Rifted by Gaurus and Metaurus, wends
Past Apennine, no longer on his right,
Umbri and Tuscans; and at Rome descends.
From Rome to Ostia goes Mount Alban's knight:
Thence to the city sails wherein a grave
His pious son to old Anchises gave.

There changes bark; and thence in haste he goes,
Bound toward Lampedosa's island-shore,
That place of combat chosen by the foes,
And where they had encountered Frank and Moor.
Rinaldo grants his boatmen no repose;
That do what can be done by sail and oar.
But with ill wind and strong the warrior strives;
And, though by little, there too late arrives.

Thither he came what time Anglantes' peer
The useful and the glorious deed had done;
Had slain those paynim kings in the career,
But had a hard and bloody conquest won:
Dead was Sir Brandimart; and Olivier,
Dangerously hurt and sore, sate woe-begone,
Somedeal apart, upon the sandy ground,
Martyred and crippled by his cruel wound.

From tears could not the mournful Count refrain,
When brave Rinaldo he embraced, and said,
How in the battle Brandimart was slain.
Such love, such faith endeared the warrior dead.
Nor less Rinaldo's tears his visage stain
When he so cleft beholds their comrade's head.
Thence to embrace bold Oliviero, where
He sits with wounded foot, he makes repair.

The night preceding that ill-omened day
Flordelice dreamed the vest of sable grain
That she had made, her husband to array,
And woven with her hand and worked with pain,
Before her eyes all sprinkled-over lay
With ruddy drops, in guise of pattering rain.
That she had worked it so the lady thought;
And then was grieved at seeing what was wrought,

And seemed to say, "Yet from my lord have I
  Command to make it all of sable hue;
Now wherefore is it stained with other dye
  Against his will, in mode so strange to view?"
She from that dream draws evil augury;
  And thither on that eve the tidings flew;
But these concealed Astolpho from the dame
Till he to her with Sansonetto came.

When they are entered, and she sees no show
  Of joyful triumph, she, without a word,
Without a hint to indicate that woe,
  Knows that no longer living is her lord.
With that her gentle heart was riven so,
  And so her harassed eyes the light abhorred,
And so was every other sense astound,
That, like one dead, she sank upon the ground.

She in her hair, when life returns again,
  Fastens her hand; and on her lovely cheeks,
Repeating the beloved name in vain,
  With all her force her scorn and fury wreaks;
Uproots and tears her locks, and in her pain,
  Like woman smit by evil demon, shrieks,
Or, as Bacchante at the horn's rude sound,
Erewhile was seen to run her restless round.

Now to the one, to the other now her prayer
  She made for knife, wherewith her heart to smite;
Now she aboard the pinnace would repair
  That brought the corse of either paynim knight,
And would on either, lifeless as they were,
  Do cruel scathe, and vent her fierce despite.
Now would she seek her lord, till at his side
She rested from her weary search, and died.

"Is this, O Brandimart, is this the reign,
  Whose honored scepter thou wast now to take?
With thee to Dommogire, thy fair domain,
  Thus wend I; me thus welcome dost thou make?
Alas! what hope to-day thou renderest vain!
  Ah! what designs, fell Fortune, dost thou break!
Ah! wherefore fear I, since a lot so blest
Is lost, to lose as well the worthless rest?"

Repeating this and other plaint, so spite
  And fury waxed, that she is her despair
Made new assault upon her tresses bright,
  As if the fault were wholly in her hair;
Wildly her hands together doth she smite,
  And gnaw; with nails her lip and bosom tear.
But I return to Roland and his peers;
While she bemoans herself and melts in tears.

Roland with Olivier, who much requires
Some leech's care, his anguish to allay;
And who, himself, some worthy place desires
As much, wherein Sir Brandimart to lay,
Steers for the lofty mountain, that with fires
Brightens the night, with smoke obscures the day.
The wind blows fair, and on the starboard hand,
Not widely distant from them, lies that land.

With a fresh wind that in their favor blows,
They loose their hawser at the close of day;
In heaven above the silent goddess shows
Her shining horn, to guide them on their way;
And on the following morn before them rose
The pleasant shores that round Girgenti lay.
Here Roland orders for the ensuing night
All that is needful for the funeral rite.

He, when he saw his order duly done,
And now the westering sun's fair light was spent,
With many nobles, who from neighboring town,
At his invital, to Girgenti went—
The shore with torches blazing up and down,
And sounding wide with cries and loud lament—
Thither returned where late, of life bereft,
His friend, beloved in life and death, was left.

There stands Bardino, weeping o'er the bier,
Who under Age's heavy burden bows;
Who, in the tears on shipboard shed whilere,
Might well have wept away his eyes and brows;
Upbraiding skies and stars, the cavalier,
Like lion, in whose veins a fever glows,
Roars as he wreathes his wayward hands within
His hoary hair, and rends his wrinkled skin.

Upon the paladin's return the cry
Redoubled, and the mourning louder grew.
Orlando to the corse approached more nigh,
And speechless stood awhile, his friend to view,
Pale, as at eve is the acanthus' dye
Or lily's, which were plucked at morn. He drew
A heavy sigh, and on the warrior dead
Fixing his stedfast eyes, the County said:

"O comrade bold and true, that here liest slain,
And who dost live in heaven above, I know,
Rewarded with a life, thy glorious gain,
Which neither heat nor cold can take, my woe
Forgive, if thou beholdest me complain;
Because I sorrow to remain below,
And not to share in such delights with thee;
Not that thou are not left behind with me.

"Yet by one comfort, Flordelice, is followed
His loss, for us that reft of him remain:
His death, with such surpassing glory hallowed,
To die all living warriors should be fain.
Those Decii, Curtius, in Rome's forum swallowed;
Codrus, so vaunted by the Grecian train;
Not with more honor to themselves, with more
Profit to others, went to death of yore."

These sad laments and more Orlando made;
And all this while white friars, and black, and grey,
With other clerks, by two and two arrayed,
Behind in long procession took their way;
And they to God for the departed prayed,
That he would to his rest his soul convey.
Before and all about were torches reared,
And changed to day the sable night appeared.

They raise the warrior's bier, and ranged to bear
By turns that honored weight were earl and knight.
The pall was purple silk, with broidery rare
Of gold, and pearls in costly circles dight.
Thereon, of lordly work and no less fair,
Cushions were laid, with jewels shining bright.
On which was stretched the lifeless knight in view
Arrayed in vest of like device and hue.

Banners in front and banners borne in rear,
Whose field with diverse ensignry is stained,
Unfurled accompany the funeral bier;
Which from a thousand vanquished bands were gained,
For Cæsar and for Peter's church whilere,
By that rare force, which now extinct remained.
Bucklers by other followers carried are,
Won from good warriors, whose device they bear.

By hundreds and by hundreds followed more,
Ordained for different tasks, the steps of those;
Who burning torches like those others bore.
Mantled, say rather closely muffled, goes
Roland in sables next, and evermore
His eyes suffused and red with weeping shows.
Nor wears a gladder face Mount Alban's peer.
At home his wound detains Sir Olivier.

The ceremonies would be long to say
In verse, wherewith Sir Brandimart was mourned;
The mantles, black or purple, given away;
The many torches which that eve were burned.
Wending to the cathedral, where the array
Passed on its road, were no dry eyes discerned:
All sexes, ages, ranks, in pitying mood
Gazed upon him so youthful, fair, and good.

He in the church was placed; and, when with vain
Lament the women had bemoaned the dead,
And Kyrie eleison by the priestly train,
And other holy orisons were said,
In a fair ark, upraised on columns twain,
Was reared, with sumptuous cloth of gold o'erspread.
So willed Orlando, till he could be laid
In sepulcher of costlier matter made.

Nor out of Sicily the Count departs,
Till porphyries he procures and alabasters,
And fair designs; and in their several arts
Has with large hire engaged the primest masters.
Next Flordelice, arriving in those parts,
Raises the quarried slabs and rich pilasters;
Who, good Orlando being gone before,
Is hither wafted from the Afric shore.

She, seeing that her tears unceasing flow,
And that of long lament she never tires
Nor she, for mass or service said, her woe
Can ease, or satisfy her sad desires,
Vows in her heart she thence will never go
Till from the wearied corse her soul expires;
And builds in that fair sepulcher a cell;
There shuts herself, therein for life will dwell.

Still in that sepulcher she dwelt, and worn
By weary penance, praying night and day,
It was not long, ere by the Parcæ shorn
Was her life's thread. Already on their way
Were the three Christian warriors, homeward borne,
From the isle in whose old caves the Cyclops lay,
Sorrowing and afflicted sore in mind
For their fourth comrade who remained behind.

They would not go without a leech, whose skill
Might ease the wound of warlike Olivier;
Which, as in the beginning it could ill
Be salved, is hard to heal. Meanwhile they hear
The champion so complain, his outcries fill
Orlando and all that company with fear.
While they discoursed thereon, the skipper, moved
By a new notion, said what all approved.

A hermit not far distant hence, he said,
A lonely rock inhabits in this sea;
Whose isle none, seeking succor, vainly tread,
Whether for counsel or for aid it be;
Who hath done superhuman deeds; the dead
Restores to life; and makes the blind to see;
Hushes the winds; and with a sign o' the cross
Lulls the loud billows when they highest toss;

And adds they need not doubt, if they will go
To seek that holy man to God so dear,
But he on Olivier will health bestow;
Having his virtue proved by signs more clear.
This counsel pleases good Orlando so,
That for the holy place he bids him steer;
Who never swerving from his course, espies
The lonely rock, upon Aurora's rise.

Worked by good mariners, the bark was laid
Safely beside the rugged rock and fell:
The marquis there, with crew and servants' aid,
They lowered into their boat; and through the swell
And foaming waters in that shallop made
For the rude isle; thence sought the holy cell—
The holy cell of that same hermit hoar,
By whom Rogero was baptized before.

The servant of the Lord of Paradise
Receives Orlando and the rest on land;
Blesses the company in cheerful wise;
And after of their errand makes demand;
Though he already had received advice
From angels of the coming of that band.
That they were thither bound in search of aid
For Oliviero's hurt, Orlando said;

Who, warring for the Christian faith, in fight
To perilous pass was brought by evil wound.
All dismal fear relieved that eremite,
And promised he would make him wholly sound.
In that no unguents hath the holy wight,
Nor is in other human medicine found,
His church he seeks, his knee to Jesus bows,
And issues from the fane with cheerful brows;

And in the name of those eternal Three,
The Father, and the Son, and Holy Ghost,
On Oliviero bade his blessing be,
Oh! grace vouchsafed to faith! his sainted host
From every pain the paladin did free;
And to his foot restored its vigor lost.
He moved more nimble than before, and sure;
And present was Sobrino at the cure.

Sobrino, so diseased that he descried
How worse with each succeeding day he grew,
As soon as he that holy monk espied
The manifest and mighty marvel do,
Disposed himself to cast Mahound aside,
And own in Christ a living God and true.
He, full of faith, with contrite heart demands
Our holy rite of baptism at his hands.

So him baptized the hermit; and as well
That monarch made as vigorous as whilere.
At this conversion no less gladness fell
On Roland and each Christian cavalier,
Than when, restored from deadly wound, and well
The friendly troop beheld Sir Olivier.
Rogero more rejoiced than all that crew;
And still in faith and grace the warrior grew.

CANTO XXX

Rinaldo more than all that lordly train
Rogero graced and lovingly caressed;
As well because he on the listed plain
Had proved the peer so strong in martial gest,
As that he was more courteous and humane
Than any knight that e'er laid lance in rest:
But much more; that to him on many a ground
By mighty obligation was he bound.

To honor and to hold Rogero dear,
Him, Sir Rinaldo thought, this debt constrained;
And that he could not so have done whilere,
The warlike lord was sorely grieved and pained;
When one for Afric's monarch couched the spear,
And one the cause of royal Charles maintained.
Now he Rogero for a Christian knew,
What could not then be done he now would do.

Welcome, with endless proffers, on his side,
And honor he to good Rogero paid.
The prudent sire that in such kindness spied
An opening made for more, the pass assayed:
"And nothing else remains," that hermit cried,
"(Nor will, I trust, my counsel be gainsaid)
But that, conjoined by friendship, you shall be
Yet faster coupled by affinity."

And his discourse pursuing still, the seer
So spake, he moves Rinaldo by his rede
To give his sister to the cavalier;
Albeit with either small entreaties need.
Together with Orlando, Olivier
The counsel lauds, and would that union speed.
King Charles and Aymon will, he hopes, approve,
And France will welcome wide their wedded love.

So spake together peer and paladine:
Nor knew that Aymon, with King Charles' consent,
Unto the Grecian Emperor Constantine
To give his gentle daughter had intent;
Who for young Leo, of his lofty line
The heir and hope, to crave the maid had sent.
Such warmth the praises of her worth inspired,
With love of her unseen was Leo fired.

To him hath Aymon answered, he alone
Cannot conclude thereon in other sort,
Until he first hath spoken with his son,
Rinaldo, absent then from Charles's court;
Who with winged haste, he deems, will thither run,
And joy in kinsman of such high report;
But from the high regard he bears his heir,
Can nought resolve till thither he repair.

Now good Rinaldo, of his father wide,
And of the imperial practice knowing nought,
Promised his beauteous sister as a bride,
Upon his own, as well as Roland's thought
And the others, harbored in that cell beside;
But most of all on him the hermit wrought;
And by such marriage, 'twas the peer's belief,
He could not choose but pleasure Clermont's chief.

The childe who, so long banished, had not strayed
From the lone rock, whereon the waters roared,
His farewell to that holy master made,
Who taught him the true faith. Anew with sword
Orlando girt his side, and with the blade
Frontino and martial Hector's arms restored;
As knowing horse and arms were his whilere,
As well as out of kindness to the peer.

The hermit blessings on the band implores.
They to their bark in fine return; their sails
Give to the winds, and to the waves their oars;
And such clear skies they have and gentle gales,
Nor vow nor prayer the patron makes; and moors
His pinnace in the haven of Marseilles.
There, safely harbored, let the chiefs remain,
Till I conduct Astolpho to that train.

When of that bloody, dear-bought victory
The hardly joyful tale Astolpho knew,
He, seeing evermore fair France would be
Secure from mischief from the Moorish crew,
Homeward to send the king of Æthiopy
Devised, together with his army, through
The sandy desert, by the self-same track,
Through which he led them to Biserta's sack.

Erewhile restored, in Afric waters ride
Sir Dudon's ships which did the paynims rout;
Whose prows (new miracle!) and poop, and side,
As soon as all their sable crews are out,
Are changed anew to leaves; which far and wide,
Raised by a sudden breeze, are blown about;
And scattered in mid air, like such light gear,
Go eddying with the wind, and disappear.

Home, horse and foot, the Nubian host arrayed
By squadrons, all, from wasted Afric go;
But to their king, first, thanks Astolpho paid
And said he an eternal debt should owe;
In that he had in person given him aid
With all his might and main against the foe.
The skins Astolpho gave them, which confined
The turbid and tempestuous southern wind.

When they have lofty Atlas' passes won,
The horses that the Nubian riders bear,
Turpin relates, are changed at once to stone;
So that the steeds return to what they were.
But it is time the Duke to France was gone;
Who having thus provided, in his care,
For the main places in the Moorish land,
Made the hippogryph anew his wings expand;

He reached Sardinia at one flight and shear,
Corsica from Sardinia; and then o'er
The foaming sea his venturous course did steer,
Inclining somewhat left the griffin's soar.
In the sea-marshes last his light career
He stopped, on rich Provence's pleasant shore;
Where to the hippogryph by him is done
What was erewhile enjoined by sainted John.

To him the charge did sainted John commit,
When to Provence by that winged courser borne,
Him nevermore with saddle or with bit
To gall, but let him to his lair return.
Already had the planet, whither flit
Things lost on earth, of sound deprived his horn;
For this not only hoarse but mute remained,
As soon as the holy place Astolpho gained.

Thence to Marseilles he came; and came the day
Orlando, and Rinaldo, and Olivier
Arrived therein, upon their homeward way,
With good Sobrino, and the better peer,
Rogero: not so triumphs that array
Touched by the death of him, their comrade dear,
As they for such a glorious victory won,
But for that sad disaster, would have done.

To honor those fair pillars that sustain
The state—the holy empire's corner-stone—
The nobles of his kingdom Charlemagne
Despatched, to meet the knights, as far as Sâone;
And from his city with his worthiest train,
King, Duke, and her, the partner of his throne
Issued amid a fair and gorgeous band
Of noble damsels upon either hand.

The Emperor Charles with bright and cheerful brow,
Lords, paladins and people, kinsmen, friends,
Fair love to Roland and the others show.
Mongrana and Clermont's cry the welkin rends.
No sooner, mid that kind and festal show,
The interchange of fond embracements ends,
Than Roland and his friends Rogero bring,
And mid those lords present him to the King.

With pomp triumphal and with festive cheer
The troop returns within the city walls.
With leaves and garlands green the streets appear,
And tapestried all about with gorgeous palls.
Of herbs and flowers a mingled rain, where'er
They wend, upon the conquering squadron falls,
Which with full hands from stand and window throw
Damsel and dame upon the knights below.

At every turn, in various places are,
Of sudden structure arch and trophy high,
Whereon Biserta's sack is painted fair,
Ruin and fire, and feat of chivalry:
Scaffolds, upraised for different sports elsewhere
And merrimake and stage-play meet the eye;
And, writ the truth, above, below, between,
To the empire's saviours, everywhere is seen.

With sound of shrilling pipe and trumpet proud,
And other festive music, laughter light,
Applause and favor of the following crowd,
Which scarce found room, begirt with dame and knight,
The mighty Emperor, mid those greetings loud,
Before the royal palace did alight:
Where many days he feasted high in hall
His lords, mid tourney, mummery, mask and ball.

His son to Aymon on a day made known
His sister he would make Rogero's bride;
And before Olivier and Milo's son,
Her to the childe by promise had affied;
Who think with him that kindred is there none
Wherewith to league themselves, on any side,
For valor or nobility of blood,
Better than his; nay, none so passing good.

Duke Aymon heard his heir with some disdain;
That, without concert with him, and alone
He dared to plight his daughter, whom he fain
Would marry to the Grecian Emperor's son;
And not to him that has no kingly reign,
Nay, has not aught that he can call his own;
And should not know, how little nobleness
Is valued without wealth; how virtue less.

But Beatrice, his wife, with more despite
Arraigns her son, and calls him arrogant;
And moves each open way and hidden sleight
To break Rogero's match with Bradamant;
Resolved to tax her every means and might
To make her Empress of the wide Levant.
Firm in his purpose in Mount Alban's lord,
Nor will in aught forego his plighted word.

Beatrice, who believes the highminded fair
Is at her hest, exhorts her to reply,
"Rather than she will be constrained to pair
With a poor knight, she is resolved to die;"
Nor if this wrong she from Rinaldo bear,
Will she regard her with a mother's eye;
Let her refuse and keep her steadfast course;
For her free will Rinaldo cannot force.

Silent stands mournful Bradamant, nor dares
Meanwhile her lady-mother's speech gainsay;
To whom such reverence and respect she bears,
She thinks no choice is left but to obey.
Yet a foul fault it in her eyes appears,
If what she will not do, she falsely say
She will not, for she cannot; since above
All guidance, great or small, is mighty Love.

Deny she dared not, nor yet seem content;
So, sighed and spake not; but—when uncontrolled
She could—she gave her secret sorrow vent,
While from her eyes the tears like billows rolled;
A portion of the pains that her torment,
Inflicting on her breast and locks of gold;
For this she beat, and those uptore and brake;
And thus she made lament, and thus she spake:

"Ah! shall I will what she wills not, by right
More sovereign mistress of my will than I?
Hers shall I hold so cheaply, as to slight
A mother's will, my own to satisfy?
Alas! what blemish is so foul to sight
In damsel? What so ill, as to affy
Myself to husband, reckless of her will,
Which 'tis my duty ever to fulfil?

"Wo worth the while! and shall I then to thee
By filial love be forced to be untrue,
O my Rogero, and surrender me
To a new hope, a new love, and a new
Desire; or rather from those ties break free,
From all good children to good parents due;
Observance, reverence cast aside; and measure
My duty by my happiness, my pleasure?

"Alas! with long and obstinate pursuit,
To our faith to draw Rogero have I wrought;
And finally have drawn; but with what boot,
If my fair deed for other's good be wrought?
So yearly by the bee, whose labor's fruit
Is lost for her, is hive with honey fraught.
But I will die ere I the childe forsake,
And other husband than Rogero take.

"If I shall not obey my father's hest,
Nor mother's, I my brother's shall obey,
Of greater wisdom far than them possest;
Nor Time hath made that warrior's wit his prey;
And what he wills by Roland is profest;
And, one and the other, on my side are they;
A pair more feared and honored far and wide
Than all the members of my house beside."

Rogero said; "If Aymon is disposed
An empress in his Bradamant to see,
Let not his treaty be so quickly closed
With Leo; let a year be granted me.
In that, meanwhile, I hope, by me deposed
Shall Leo with his royal father be,
And I, encircled with their forfeit crown,
Shall be for Aymon no unworthy son.

"But if he gives without delay as said,
His daughter to the son of Constantine,
If to that promise no regard be paid,
Which good Rinaldo and the paladine,
His cousin, erst before the hermit made,
The Marquis Olivier and King Sobrine,
What shall I do? such grievous wrong shall I
Endure, or, rather than endure it, die?

"'Twas ever my intent, and still 'tis so,
To have the love, not hatred, of that fair;
But should I Aymon slay, or bring some woe,
By plot or practice, on his house or heir,
Will she not justly hold me as her foe,
And me, that foeman, as her lord forswear?
What shall I do, endure such injury?
Ah! no, by Heaven! far rather I will die.

"Nay, die I will not; but with better right
Shall Leo die, who so disturbs my joy;
He and his unjust sire; less dear his flight
With Helen paid her paramour of Troy;
Nor yet in older time that foul despite,
Done to Proserpina, cost such annoy
To bold Pirithous, as for her I've lost
My grief of heart shall son and father cost."

These things Rogero said, and more beside,
Discoursing with himself, and in such strain
Oftentimes the afflicted warrior cried,
That stander-by o'erheard the knight complain,
And more than once his grief was signified
To her that was the occasion of his pain;
Who no less for his cruel woe, when known,
Lamented than for sorrows of her own.

But most, of all the sorrows that were said
To vex Rogero, most it works her woe
To hear that he afflicts himself, in dread
Lest for the Grecian prince she him forego.
Hence this belief, this error, from his head
To drive, and comfort on the knight bestow,
The trustiest of her bower-women, one day,
She to Rogero bade these words convey:

"Rogero, I what I was till death will be;
And be more faithful, if I can be more;
Deals Love in kindness or in scorn with me;
Hath doubtful Fortune good or ill in store;
I am a very rock of faith, by sea
And winds unmoved, which round about it roar.
Nor I have changed for calm or storm, nor I
Will ever change to all eternity.

"All power o'er me have I bestowed on you,
Rogero; and more than others may divine:
I know that to a prince whose throne is new
Was never fealty sworn more true than mine;
Nor ever surer state, this wide world through,
By king or keysar was possest than thine.
Thou need'st not dig a ditch nor build a tower,
In fear lest any rob thee of that power."

Other and many words with comfort rife,
And full of love and faith, she said beside;
Which might a thousand times have given him life,
Albeit a thousand times the knight had died:
But, when most clear of the tempestuous strife,
In friendly port these hopes appeared to ride,
These hopes a foul and furious wind anew
Far from the sheltering land to seaward blew.

In that the gentle Bradamant, who fain
  Would do far more than she hath signified,
With wonted daring armed her heart again;
  And boldly casting all respect aside,
One day stood up before King Charlemagne;
  And, "Sire, if ever yet," the damsel cried,
"I have found favor in your eyes for deed
Done heretofore, deny me not its meed;

"And I entreat, before I claim my fee,
  That you to me your royal promise plight,
To grant my prayer; and fain would have you see
  That what I shall demand is just and right."
"Thy valor, damsel dear, deserves from me
  The boon wherewith thy worth I should require,"
Charles answered, "and I to content thee swear,
Though of my kingdom thou should'st claim a share."

"The boon for which I to your highness sue,
  Is not to let my parents me accord,"
Pursued the martial damsel, "save he shew
  More prowess than myself, to any lord.
Let him contend with me in tourney, who
  Would have me, or assay me with the sword.
Me as his wife let him that wins me, wear;
Let him that loses me, with other pair."

With cheerful face the Emperor made reply,
  The entreaty was well worthy of the maid;
And that with tranquil mind she might rely,
  He would accord the boon for which she prayed.
This audience was not given so secretly,
  But that the news to others was conveyed;
Which on that very day withal was told
In the ears of Beatrice and Aymon old;

Who against Bradamant with fury flame,
  And both alike, sudden anger fraught,
(For plainly they perceive that in her claim
  She for Rogero more than Leo wrought)
And active to prevent the damsel's aim
  From being to a safe conclusion brought,
Privily take her from King Charles's court,
And thence to Rocca Fortes tower transport.

A castle this, which royal Charlemagne
  Had given to Aymon some few days before,
Built between Carcassonne and Perpignan,
  On a commanding point upon the shore.
Resolved to send her eastward, there the twain
  As in a prison kept her evermore.
Willing or nilling, so must she forsake
Rogero, and for lord must Leo take.

The martial maid of no less modest vein
Than bold and full of fire before the foe,
Albeit no guard on her the castellan
Hath set, and she is free to come or go,
Observant of her sire, obeys the rein;
Yet prison, death and every pain and woe
To suffer is resolved that constant maid
Before by her Rogero be betrayed.

Rinaldo who thus ravished from his hand,
By ancient Aymon's craft, his sister spied,
And saw he could no more in wedlock's band
Dispose of her, by him in vain affied,
Of his old sire complains, and him doth brand,
Laying his filial love and fear aside:
But little him Rinaldo's words molest,
Who by the maid will do as likes him best.

Rogero, hearing this and sore afraid
That he shall lose his bride; and Leo take,
If left alive, by force or love the maid,
Resolved within himself (but nothing spake)
Constantine's heir should perish by his blade;
And of Augustus he a god would make.
He, save his hope deceived him and was vain,
Would sire and son deprive of life and reign.

His limbs in arms, which Trojan Hector's were,
And afterward the Tartar king's, he steeled;
Bade rein Frontino, and his wonted wear
Exchanged, crest, surcoat and emblazoned shield.
On that emprize it pleased him not to bear
His argent eagle on its azure field.
White as a lily was a unicorn
By him upon a field of crimson worn.

He chose from his attendant squires the best,
And willed none else should him accompany;
And gave him charge, that ne'er by him exprest
Rogero's name in any place should be;
Crost Meuse and Rhine, and pricked upon his quest
Through the Austrian countries into Hungary;
Along the right bank of the Danube made,
And rode an-end until he reached Belgrade.

Where Save into dark Danube makes descent,
And to the sea, increased by him, doth flow,
He saw the imperial ensigns spread and tent
And white pavilion, thronged with troops below.
For Constantine to have that town was bent
Anew, late won by the Bulgarian foe,
In person, with his son, is Constantine,
With all the empire's force his host to line.

Within Belgrade, and through the neighboring peak,
Even to its bottom which the waters lave,
The Bulgar fronts him; and both armies seek
A watering-place in the intermediate Save.
A bridge across that rapid stream the Greek
Would fling; the Bulgar would defend the wave:
When thither came Rogero; and engaged
Beheld the hosts in fight, which hotly raged.

The Greeks in that affray were four to one,
And with pontoons to bridge the stream supplied;
And a bold semblance through their host put on
Of crossing to the river's farther side.
Leo meanwhile was from the river gone
With covert guile; he took a circuit wide,
Then thither made return; his bridges placed
From bank to bank, and passed the stream in haste.

With many horse and foot in battle dight,
Who nothing under twenty thousand rank,
Along the river rode the Grecian knight,
And fiercely charged his enemies in flank.
The Emperor, when his son appeared in sight,
Leading his squadrons on the farther bank,
Uniting bridge and bark together, crost
Upon his part the stream with all his host.

King Vatran, chief of the Bulgarian band,
Wise, bold, withal a warrior, here and there
Labored in vain such onset to withstand,
And the disorder of his host repair;
When Leo pressed him sore, and with strong hand
The King to earth beneath his courser bare;
Whom at the prince's hest, for all too fierce
Is he to yield, a thousand falchions pierce.

The Bulgar host hath hitherto made head;
But when they see their sovereign is laid low,
And everywhere that tempest wax and spread,
They turn their backs where erst they faced the foe.
The childe, who mid the Greeks, from whom they fled,
Was borne along, beheld that overthrow,
And bound himself their battle to restore,
As hating Constantine and Leo more.

Advanced before the others, he descried
A cavalier in crimson vest, whereon
With all its stalk in silk and gold was spied
A pod, like millet, in embroidery done;
Constantine's nephew, by the sister's side,
He was, but was no less beloved than son.
He split like glass his shield and scaly rind;
And the long lance appeared a palm behind.

He left the dead, and drew his shining blade
Upon a squadron, whom he saw most nigh;
And now at one, and now at other made;
Cleft bodies, and made heads from shoulders fly.
At throat, at breast and flank the warrior laid;
Smote hand, and arm, and shoulder, bust, and thigh;
And through that champaign ran the reeking blood,
As to the valley foams the mountain-flood.

None that behold those strokes maintain their place;
So are they all bewildered by their fear.
Thus suddenly the battle changed its face;
For, catching courage from the cavalier,
The Bulgar squadrons rally, turn, and chase
The Grecian troops that fled from them whilere.
Lost was all order in a thought, and they
With all their banners fled in disarray.

Leo Augustus on a swelling height,
Seeing his followers fly, hath taken post;
Where woful and bewildered (for to sight
Nothing in all the country round is lost)
He from his lofty station eyes the knight,
Who with his single arm destroys that host;
And cannot choose, though so his prowess harms,
But praise that peer and own his worth in arms.

And, as a man of great and noble heart
(Where many others would have hatred sworn),
Enamored of such valor, on his part,
Would not desire to see him suffer scorn;
For one that died, six Grecians' death less smart
Would cause that prince; and better had he borne
To lose as well a portion of his reign,
Than to behold so good a warrior slain.

As baby, albeit its fond mother beat
And drive it forth in anger, in its fear
Neither to sire nor sister makes retreat,
But to her arms returns with fondling cheer,
So Leo, though Rogero in his heat
Slaughters his routed van and threats his rear,
Cannot that champion hate; because above
His anger is the admiring prince's love.

Leo, for fear his bands be wholly spent,
Bids sound the assembly his Greek squadrons through.
He to his father a quick courier sent,
To pray that he would pass the stream anew;
Who, if the way was open, well content
Might with his bargain be; and with a few
Whom he collects, the Grecian cavalier
Recrossed the bridge by which he past whilere.

When done was that day's fight, wherein (since borne
To ground the Bulgar king his life did yield)
His squadrons would have suffered scathe and scorn
Had not for them the warrior won the field,
The warrior that the snowy unicorn
Wore for his blazon on a crimson shield,
To him all flock, in him with joy and glee
The winner of that glorious battle see.

Some bow and some salute him; of the rest
Some kissed the warrior's feet, and some his hand.
Round him as closely as they could they prest,
And happy those are deemed that nearest stand;
More those that touch him; for to touch a blest
And supernatural thing believes the band.
On him with shouts that rent the heavens they cried,
To be their king, their captain, and their guide.

As king or captain them will he command
As liked them best, he said, but will not lay
On sceptre or on leading-staff his hand;
Nor yet Belgrade will enter on that day;
For first, ere farther flies young Leo's band,
And they across the river make their way,
Him will he follow, nor forego, until
That Grecian leader he o'ertake and kill.

A thousand miles and more for this alone
He thither measured, and for nought beside.
He saith; and from the multitude is gone,
And by a road that's shown to him doth ride
For toward the bridge is royal Leo flown,
Haply lest him from this the foe divide:
Behind him pricks Rogero with such fire
The warrior calls not, nor awaits, his squir

Such vantage Leo has in flight (to flee
He rather may be said than to retreat),
The passage open hath he found and free,
And then destroys the bridge and burns his fleet.
Rogero arrived not, till beneath the sea
The sun was hid; nor lodging found; his beat
He still pursued; and now shone forth the moon;
But town or village found the warrior none.

Because he wots not where to lodge, he goes
All night, nor from his load Frontino frees.
When the new sun his early radiance shows,
A city to the left Rogero sees;
And there all day determines to repose,
As where he may his wearied courser ease,
Which he so far that livelong night had pressed;
Nor had he drawn his bit, nor given him rest.

Ungiardo had that city in his guard,
Constantine's liegeman, and to him right dear;
Who, since upon the Bulgars he had warred,
Much horse and foot had sent that Emperor; here
Now entered (for the entrance was not barred)
Rogero, and found such hospitable cheer,
He to fare farther had no need, in trace
Of better or of more abundant place.

In the same hostelry with him, a guest,
Was lodged that evening a Roumanian knight;
Present what time the childe with lance in rest
Succored the Bulgars in that cruel fight;
Who hardly had escaped his hand, sore prest
And scared as never yet was living wight;
So that he trembled still, disturbed in mind,
And deemed the knight of the unicorn behind.

He by the buckler knew as soon as spied
The cavalier, whose arms that blazon bear,
For him that routed the Byzantine side,
By hand of whom so many slaughtered were.
He hurried to the palace, and applied
For audience, weighty tidings to declare;
And, to Ungiardo led forthwith, rehearsed
What shall by me in other strain be versed.

CANTO XXXI

Through that fair victory, when overthrown
Were Leo and his royal sire, the knight
Who won that battle to such trust is grown,
In his good fortune and his peerless might,
He, without following, without aid, alone
(So is he prompted by his daring sprite)
Thinks, mid a thousand squadrons in array
—Footmen and horsemen—sire and son to slay.

But she, that wills no trust shall e'er be placed
In her by man, to him doth shortly show
How wight by her is raised, and how abased;
How soon she is a friend, how soon a foe;
She makes him know Rogero that in haste
Is gone to work that warrior shame and woe—
The cavalier, who in that battle dread
With much ado had from his falchion fled.

He to Ungiardo hastens to declare
The childe who put the imperial host to flight,
Whose carnage many years will not repair,
Here passed the day and was to pass the night;
And saith, that Fortune, taken by the hair,
Without more trouble, and without more fight,
Will, if he prisons *him*, the Bulgars bring
Beneath the yoke and lordship of his King.

Ungiardo from the crowd, which had pursued
Thither their flight from that ensanguined plain
(For, troop by troop, a countless multitude
Arrived, because not all the bridge could gain),
Knew what a cruel slaughter had ensued;
For there the moiety of the Greeks was slain;
And knew that by a cavalier alone
One host was saved, and one was overthrown;

And that undriven he should have made his way
Into the net, and of his own accord,
Wondered, and showed his pleasure at the say
In visage, gesture, and in joyful word.
He waited till Rogero sleeping lay;
Then softly sent his guard to take that lord;
And made the valiant childe who had no dread
Of such a danger, prisoner in his bed.

By his own shield accused, that witness true,
The childe is captive in Novogorood
To Ungiardo, worst among the cruel, who
Marvelous mirth to have that prisoner shewed.
And what, since he was naked, could he do,
Bound, while his eyes were yet by slumber glued?
A courier, who the news should quickly bear,
Ungiardo bids to Constantine repair.

Constantine on that night with all his host,
Raising his camp, from Save's green shore had gone;
With this in Beleticche he takes post,
Androphilus', his sister's husband's town,
Father of him whose arms in their first joust
(As if of wax had been his habergeon)
Had pierced and carved the puissant cavalier,
Now by Ungiardo pent in dungeon drear.

Here from attacks the Emperor makes assure
The city walls and gates on every side;
Lest, from the Bulgar squadrons ill secure,
Having so good a warrior for their guide,
His broken Grecians worse than fear endure;
Deeming the rest would by his hand have died.
Now he is taken, these breed no alarms,
Nor would he fear the banded world in arms.

No less occasion has the Emperor's son
For joying; for besides that he anew
Trusts to acquire Belgrade, and tower and town
Throughout the Bulgar's country to subdue,
He would by favors make the knight his own,
And hopes to rank him in his warlike crew;
Nor need he envy, guarded by his blade,
King Charles', Orlando's, or Rinaldo's aid.

Theodora was by other thoughts possesst,
Whose son was killed by young Rogero's spear;
Which through his shoulders, entering at his breast,
Issued a palm's breadth in the stripling's rear
Constantine's sister she, by grief opprest,
Fell down before him; and with many a tear
That dropt into her bosom, while she sued,
His heart with pity softened and subdued.

"I still before these feet will bow my knee,
Save on this felon, good my lord," she cried,
"Who killed my son, to venge me thou agree,
Now that we have him in our hold; beside
That he thy nephew was, thou seest how thee
He loved; thou seest what feats upon thy side
That warrior wrought; thou seest if thou wilt blot
Thine own good name, if thou avenge him not.

"Thou seest how righteous Heaven by pity stirred
From the wide champaign, red with Grecian gore,
Bears that fell man; and like a reckless bird
Into the fowler's net hath made him soar;
That for short season, for revenge deferred,
My son may mourn upon the Stygian shore.
Give me, my lord, I pray, this cruel foe,
That by his torment I may soothe my woe."

So well she mourns; and in such moving wise
And efficacious doth she make lament
(Nor from before the emperor will arise,
Though he three times and four the dame has hent,
And to uplift by word and action tries),
That he is forced her wishes to content;
And thus, according to her prayer, commands
The childe to be delivered to her hands;

And not therein his orders to delay,
They take the warrior of the unicorn
To cruel Theodora; but one day
Of respite has the knight! to have him torn
In quarters, yet alive! to rend and slay
Her prisoner publicly with shame and scorn,
Seems a poor pain; and he must undergo
Other unwonted and unmeasured woe.

At the commandment of that woman dread,
  Chains on his neck and hands and feet they don;
And put him in a dungeon-cell, where thread
  Of light was never by Apollo thrown.
He has a scanty mess of mouldy bread;
  And sometimes is he left two days with none;
And one that doth the place of jailer fill
Is prompter than herself to work him ill.

Oh! if Duke Aymon's daughter brave and fair,
  Or if Marphisa of exalted mind,
Had heard Rogero's sad estate declare,
  And how he in this guise in prison pined,
To his rescue either would have made repair,
  And would have flung the fear of death behind;
Nor had bold Bradamant, intent to aid,
Respect to Beatrice or Aymon paid.

Meanwhile King Charlemagne upon his side,
  Heeding his promise made in solemn sort,
That none should have the damsel for his bride,
  That of her prowess in the field fell short;
Not only had his sovereign pleasure cried
  With sound of trumpet in his royal court,
But in each city subject to his crown.
Hence quickly through the world the bruit was blown.

Such the condition which he bids proclaim:
  He that would with Duke Aymon's daughter wed,
Must with the sword contend against that dame
  From the sun's rise until he seeks his bed;
And if he for that time maintains the game,
  And is not overcome, without more said,
The lady is adjudged to have lost the stake;
Nor him for husband can refuse to take.

The choice of arms must be by her foregone,
  No matter who may claim it in the course;
And by the damsel this may well be done,
  Good at all arms alike, on foot or horse.
Aymon, who cannot strive against the crown—
  Can not and will not—yields at length perforce.
He much the matter sifts, and in the end
Resolves to court with Bradamant to wend.

Though for the daughter choler and disdain
  The mother nursed, yet that she honor due
Might have, she garments, dyed in different grain,
  Had wrought for her, of various form and hue.
Bradamant for the court of Charlemagne
  Departs, and finding not her love, to her view
His noble court appears like that no more
Which had appeared to her so fair before.

Oh! how she sighs! how fears the gentle maid,
  Hearing Rogero, as it were, was flown!
Oh! how above all other terrors, weighed
  The fear that to forget her he was gone!
That, seeing Aymon still his wish gainsayed,
  And that to wed the damsel hope was none,
He fled, perchance, so hoping to be loosed
From toils wherein he by her love was noosed;

And that with further end the youthful lord
  Her from his heart more speedily to chase,
Will rove from realm to realm, till one afford
  Some dame that may his former love efface;
Even, as the proverb says, that in a board
  One nail drives out another from its place.
A second thought succeeds, and paints the youth
Arraigned of fickleness, as full of truth.

"I am like miser, so intent on gear,
  And who hath this so buried in his heart,
That he, for hoarded treasure still in fear,
  Cannot live gladly from his wealth apart.
Since I Rogero neither see nor hear,
  More puissant far than Hope, O Fear! thou art;
To thee, though false and idle, I give way;
And cannot choose but yield myself thy prey.

"As when the sun withdraws his glittering head,
  The shadows lengthen, causing vain affright;
And as the shadows, when he leaves his bed,
  Vanish, and reassure the timid wight:
Without Rogero so I suffer dread;
  Dread lasts not, if Rogero is in sight.
Return to me, return, Rogero, lest
My hope by fear should wholly be opprest."

The cruelty which by that beldam ill
  Was practised on the prisoned cavalier,
And who prepared the wretched childe to kill,
  By torture now, and pains unused whilere,
While so Rogero pined, the gracious will
  Of Heaven conveyed to gentle Leo's ear;
And put into his heart the means to aid,
And not to let such worth be overlaid.

The courteous Leo that Rogero loved,
  Not that the Grecian knew howe'er that he
Rogero was, but by that valor moved
  Which sole and superhuman seemed to be,
Thought much, and mused, and planned, how it behoved
  —And found at last a way—to set him free;
So that his cruel aunt should have no right
To grieve or say he did her a despite.

In secret, Leo with the man that bore
  The prison-keys a parley had, and said,
He wished to see that cavalier, before
  Upon the wretch was done a doom so dread.
When it was night, one, faithful found of yore,
  Bold, strong, and good in brawl, he thither led;
And by the silent warder (taught that none
Must know 'twas Leo) was the door undone.

Leo, escorted by none else beside,
  Was led by the compliant castellan,
With his companion, to the tower, where stied
  Was he, reserved for nature's latest pain.
There round the neck of their unwary guide,
  Who turns his back the wicket to unchain,
A slip-knot Leo and his follower cast;
And, throttled by the noose, he breathes his last.

The trap upraised, by rope from thence suspended,
  For such a need, the Grecian cavalier,
With lighted flambeau in his hand, descended,
  Where, straitly bound, and without sun to cheer,
Rogero lay, upon a grate extended,
  Less than a palm's breadth of the water clear.
To kill him in a month, or briefer space,
Nothing was needed but that deadly place.

Lovingly Leo clipt the childe and, "Me,
  O cavalier! thy matchless valor," cried,
"Hath in indissoluble bands to thee,
  In willing and eternal service, tied;
And wills thy good to mine preferred should be,
  And I for thine my safety set aside,
And weigh thy friendship more than sire, and all
Whom I throughout the world my kindred call.

"I Leo am, that thou what fits may'st know,
  Come to thy succor, the Greek Emperor's son.
If ever Constantine, my father, trow
  That I have aided thee, I danger run
To be exiled, or aye with troubled brow
  Regarded for the deed that I have done;
For thee he hates because of those thy blade
Put to the rout and slaughtered near Belgrade."

He his discourse with more beside pursues,
  That might from death to life the childe recall;
And all this while Rogero's bands doth loose.
  "Infinite thanks I owe you," cries the thrall,
"And I the life you give me, for your use
  Will ever render back, upon your call;
And still, at all your needs, I for your sake,
And at all times, that life will promptly stake."

Rogero is rescued; and the gaoler slain
Is left in that dark dungeon in his place;
Nor is Rogero known, nor are the twain.
Leo the warrior, free from bondage base,
Brings home, and there in safety to remain
Persuades, in secret, four or six days' space;
Meanwhile for him will he retrieve the gear
And courser by Ungiardo reft whilere.

Thither meanwhile had tidings been conveyed
Of Charles' decree: that who in nuptial tie
Would yoke with Bradamant with trenchant blade
Or lance must with the maid his prowess try.
These news the Grecian prince so ill appaid,
His cheek was seen to blanch with sickly dye;
Because, as one that measured well his might,
He knew he was no match for her in fight.

Communing with himself, he can supply
(He sees) the valor wanting with his wit;
And the strange knight with his own ensignry,
Whose name is still unknown to him, will fit:
Him he against Frank champion, far and nigh,
Believes he may for force and daring pit;
And if the knight to that emprize agree,
Vanquished and taken Bradamant will be.

But two things must he do—must first dispose
That cavalier to undertake the emprize;
Then send afield the champion whom he chose,
In mode that none suspect the youth's disguise:
To him the matter Leo doth disclose;
And after prays in efficacious wise,
That he the combat with the maid will claim,
Under false colors and in other's name.

Much weighs the Grecian's eloquence; but more
Than eloquence with good Rogero weighed
The mighty obligation which he bore;
That debt that cannot ever be repaid.
So, albeit it appeared a hardship sore
And thing well-nigh impossible, he said,
With blither face than heart, that Leo's will
In all that he commands he would fulfil.

Right sure he is to die; if he forego
The lady, he foregoes his life no less.
His heart will break through his distress and woe,
Or, breaking not with woe and with distress,
He will, himself, the bands of life undo,
And of its clay the spirit dispossess.
For all things can he better bear than one—
Than see that gentle damsel not his own.

To die is he disposed; but how to die
  Cannot as yet the sorrowing lord decide:
Sometimes he thinks his prowess to belie
  And offer to her sword his naked side:
For never death can come more happily
  Than if her hand the fatal falchion guide;
Then sees, except he wins the martial maid
For that Greek prince, the debt remains unpaid.

With the Emperor's license, armor to prepare,
  And steeds meanwhile had wrought his youthful son;
Who with such goodly following as might square
  With his degree, upon his way was gone:
With him Rogero rides, through Leo's care,
  Equipt with horse and arms that were his own
Day after day the squadron pricks; nor tarries
Until arrived in France; arrived at Paris.

Leo will enter not the town; but nigh
  Pitches his broad pavilions on the plain;
And his arrival by an embassy
  Makes known that day to royal Charlemagne.
Well pleased is he; and visits testify
  And many gifts the monarch's courteous vein.
His journey's cause the Grecian Prince displayed
And to despatch his suit the sovereign prayed.

To send afield the damsel, who denied
  Ever to take in wedlock any lord
Weaker than she; for she should be his bride
  Or he would perish by the lady's sword.
Charles undertook for this; and, on her side,
  The following day upon the listed sward
Before the walls, in haste, enclosed that night,
Appeared the martial maid, equipped for fight.

Rogero passed the night before the day
  Wherein by him the battle should be done,
Like that which felon spends, condemned to pay
  Life's forfeit with the next succeeding sun.
He made his choice to combat in the fray
  All armed; because he would discovery shun;
Nor barded steed he backed, nor lance he shook;
Nor other weapon than his falchion took.

With a new sword will he the maid await;
  For well he knew against the enchanted blade
As soft as paste would prove all mail and plate,
  For never any steel its fury stayed;
And heavily with hammer, to rebate
  Its edge, as well he on this falchion laid.
So armed, Rogero in the lists appeared,
When the first dawn of day the horizon cheered.

To look like Leo, o'er his breast is spread
The surcoat that the Prince is wont to wear;
And the gold eagle with its double head
He blazoned on the crimson shield doth bear;
And (what the childe's disguisement well may stead)
Of equal size and stature are the pair.
In the other's form presents himself the one;
That other lets himself be seen of none.

Dordona's martial maid is of a vein
Right different from the gentle youth's, who sore
Hammers and blunts the falchion's tempered grain,
Lest it his opposite should cleave or bore.
She whets her steel, and into it would fain
Enter, that stripling to the quick to gore;
Yea, would such fury to her strokes impart,
That each should go directly to his heart.

As sometimes after thunder sudden wind
Turns the sea upside down; and far and nigh
Dim clouds of dust the cheerful daylight blind
Raised in a thought from earth, and whirled heaven-high,
Scud beasts and herd together with the hind,
And into hail and rain dissolves the sky,
So she upon the signal bared her brand,
And fell on her Rogero, sword in hand.

Now aims that martial maid a trenchant blow,
And now gives point; and wholly is intent
'Twixt plate and plate to reach her hated foe;
So that her stifled fury she may vent:
Now on this side, now that, now high, now low,
She strikes, and circles him, on mischief bent;
And evermore she rages and repines;
As balked of every purpose she designs.

Sparks now his shield, now helm, now cuirass scatter,
While straight and back strokes, aimed now low, now high,
Whrch good Rogero's head and bosom batter,
And arms, by thousands and by thousand fly
Faster than on the sounding farm-roof patter
Hailstones descending from a troubled sky.
Rogero, at his ward, with dextrous care,
Defends himself, and ne'er offends the fair.

Now stopped, now circled, now retired the knight,
And oft his hand his foot accompanied;
And lifted shield, and shifted sword in fight,
Where shifting he the hostile hand espied.
Either he smote her not, or—did he smite—
Smote where he deemed least evil would betide.
The lady, ere the westering sun descend,
Desires to bring that duel to an end.

Of the edict she remembered her, and knew
Her peril, save the foe was quickly sped;
For if she took not in one day, nor slew
Her claimant, she was taken; and his head
Phœbus was now about to hide from view,
Nigh Hercules' pillars, in his watery bed,
When first she 'gan misdoubt her power to cope
With that strong foe, and to abandon hope.

When Phœbus wholly under water goes,
Charlemagne bids the warring pair divide:
And Bradamant (nor boots it to oppose)
Allots to youthful Leo as a bride.
Not there Rogero tarried to repose;
Nor loosed his armor, nor his helm untied:
On a small hackney, hurrying sore, he went
Where Leo him awaited in his tent.

Twice in fraternal guise and oftener threw
Leo his arms about the cavalier;
And next his helmet from his head withdrew,
And kiss'd him on both cheeks with loving cheer.
"I would," he cried, "that thou wouldst ever do
By me what pleaseth thee; for thou wilt ne'er
Weary my love: and at thy call I lend
To thee myself and state; these freely spend;

"Nor see I recompense that can repay
The mighty obligation that I owe;
Though of the garland I should disarray
My brows, and upon thee that gift bestow."
Rogero, on whom his sorrows press and prey,
Who loathes his life, immersed in that deep woe,
Little replies; the ensigns he had worn
Returns, and takes again his unicorn;

And showing himself spiritless and spent,
From thence as quickly as he could withdrew,
And from young Leo's to his lodgings went;
When it was midnight, armed himself anew,
Saddled his horse, and sallied from his tent
(He takes no leave, and none his going view),
And his Frontino to that road addrest
Which seemed to please the goodly courser best.

"Whereof should I complain," he said, "wo's me!
So of my every good at once forlorn?
Ah! if I will not bear this injury
Without revenge, against whom shall I turn?
For I, besides myself, none other see
That hath inflicted on me scathe and scorn.
Then I to take revenge for all the harm
Done to myself, against myself must arm.

"Yet was but to myself this injury done,
Myself to spare (because this touched but me),
I haply could, yet hardly could, be won;
Nay, I will say outright, I could not be.
Less can I be, since not to me alone,
But Bradamant, is done this injury;
Even if I could consent myself to spare,
It fits me not unvenged to leave that fair.

"Then I the damsel will avenge, and die
(Nor this disturbs me), whatso'er betide;
For, bating death, I know not aught, whereby
Defence against my grief can be supplied.
But I lament myself alone, that I,
Before offending her, should not have died.
O happier Fortune! had I breathed my last
In Theodora's dungeon prisoned fast!

He entered into a dark woodland, where
He thickest trees and most entangled, spied;
But first Frontino was the warrior's care,
Whom he unharnessed wholly, and untied.
"O my Frontino, if thy merits rare
I could reward, thou little cause," he cried,
"Shouldst have to envy him, so highly graced,
Who soared to heaven, and mid the stars was placed."

If him sad thoughts so harass and torment,
That bird and beast are softened by his cries
(For, saving these, none hears the sad lament,
Nor sees the flood that trickles from his eyes),
You are not to believe that more content
The Lady Bradamant in Paris lies;
Who can no longer her delay excuse,
Nor Leo for her wedded lord refuse.

Ere she herself to any consort tie,
Except her own Rogero, she will fain
Do whatso can be done; her word belie;
Anger friends, kindred, court, and Charlemagne;
And if she nothing else can do, will die,
By poison or her own good falchion slain,
For not to live appears far lesser woe,
Than, living, her Rogero to forego.

"How can it be, Rogero, thou alone
Hast read not what by all the world is read?
If thou hast read it not, nor hither flown,
How canst thou but a prisoner be, or dead?
But well I wot, that if the truth were known,
This Leo will for thee some snare have spread;
The traitor will have barred thy way, intent
Thou shouldst not him by better speed prevent.

"If I am held as taken, since the knight
I had not force to take nor yet to slay;
A thing that is not, in my judgment, right;
Nor I to Charles's sentence will give way,
I know that I shall be esteemed as light,
If what I lately said, I now unsay;
But of those many ladies that have past
For light, I am not, I, the first or last.

"Enough I to my lover faith maintain,
And, firmer than a rock, am still found true!
And far herein surpass the female train,
That were in olden days, or are in new!
Nor, if they me as fickle shall arraign,
Care I, so good from fickleness ensue;
Though I am lighter than a leaf be said,
So I be forced not with that Greek to wed."

Then rose the haught Marphisa, when 'twas morn,
To appear before the King, to whom that maid
Said, to the childe, her brother, mighty scorn
Was done; nor should he be so ill appaid,
That from him should his plighted wife be torn,
And nought thereof unto the warrior said;
And on whoever lists she will in strife
Prove Bradamant to be Rogero's wife;

And this, before all others, will prove true
On her, if to deny it she will dare;
For she had to Rogero, in her view,
Spoken those words which they that marry swear;
And with all ceremony wont and due
So was the contract sealed between the pair,
They were no longer free; nor could forsake
The one the other, other spouse to take.

Whether Marphisa true or falsely spake,
I well believe that, rather with intent
Young Leo's purpose, right or wrong, to break,
Than tell the truth, she speaks; and with consent
Of Bradamant doth that avowal make;
For to exclude the hated Leo bent,
And of Rogero to be repossest,
This she believes her shortest way and best.

Sorely by this disturbed, King Charlemagne
Bade Bradamant be called, and to her told
That which the proud Marphisa would maintain;
And Aymon present in the press behold!
Bradamant drops her head, nor treats as vain,
Nor vouches, what avows that virgin bold,
In such confusion, they may well believe
That fierce Marphisa speaks not to deceive.

Joy good Orlando and Rinaldo show,
Who view in valorous Marphisa's plea
A cause the alliance shall no further go,
Which sealed already Leo deemed to be;
And yet, in spite of stubborn Aymon's no,
Bradamant shall Rogero's consort be;
And they may, without strife, without despite
Done to Duke Aymon, give her to the knight.

For if such words have pass'd between the twain,
Fast is the knot and cannot be untied;
They what they vowed more fairly will obtain,
And without further strife are these affied.
"This is a plot, a plot devised in vain;
And ye deceive yourselves," Duke Aymon cried;
"For, were the story true which ye have feigned,
"Believe not therefore that your cause is gained.

"For granting what I will not yet allow,
And what I to believe as yet demur,
That weakly to Rogero so her vow
Was plighted, as Rogero's was to her,
Where was the contract made, and when and how?
More clearly this to me must ye aver.
Either it was not so, I am advised;
Or was before Rogero was baptized.

"And if it were before the youthful knight
A Christian was, I will not heed it, I;
For 'twixt a faithful and a paynim wight,
I deem that nought avails the marriage-tie.
For this not vainly in the doubtful fight
Should Constantine's fair son have risked to die;
Nor Charlemagne for this, our sovereign lord,
Will forfeit, I believe, his plighted word.

"What now you say you should before have said,
While yet the matter was unbroke, and ere
Charles at my daughter's prayer that edict made
Which has drawn Leo to the combat here."
Orlando and Rinaldo were gainsayed
So before royal Charles by Clermont's peer;
And equal Charlemagne heard either side,
But neither would for this nor that decide.

Some with Rogero, some with Leo side;
But the most numerous are Rogero's friends,
Who against Aymon, ten to one, divide.
Good Charlemagne to neither party bends,
But wills that cause shall be by justice tried,
And to his parliament the matter sends.
Marphisa, now the bridal was deferred,
Appeared anew, and other question stirred,

And said, "In that another cannot have
Bradamant, while my brother is alive,
Let Leo, if the gentle maid he crave,
His foe in listed fight of life deprive;
And he that sends the other to his grave,
Freed from his rival, with the lady wive."
Forthwith this challenge, as erewhile the rest,
To Leo was declared at Charles' behest.

Leo who if he had the cavalier
Of the unicorn, believed he from his foe
Was safe; and thought no peril would appear
Too hard a feat for him; and knew not how
Thence into solitary woods and drear
That warrior had been hurried by his woe;
Him gone for little time and for disport
Believed, and took his line in evil sort.

Through city, and through hamlet, and through town
He sends to seek Rogero, far and near;
And not content with this, himself is gone
In person, on his steed, to find the peer.
But of the missing warrior tidings none
Nor he nor any of the court would hear.
But for Melissa: I for other verse
Reserve myself, her doings to rehearse.

CANTO XXXII

Joys Victor Fausto; Tancred joys to view
My sail; and with them joy a hundred more.
Women and men I see, a mingled crew,
At my return rejoicing, crowd the shore.
Then, since the wind blows fair, nor much to do
Remains, let me my course delay no more;
And turning to Melissa, in what way
She rescued good Rogero let me say.

Much bent was this Melissa (as I know
I many times have said to you whilere)
That Bradamant in wedlock should bestow
Her hand upon the youthful cavalier;
And so at heart had either's weal and woe,
That she from hour to hour of them would hear;
Hence ever on that quest she spirits sent,
One still returning as the other went.

A prey to deep and stubborn grief, reclined
Mid gloomy shades Rogero they descried;
Firm not to swallow food of any kind,
Nor from that purpose to be turned aside;
And so to die of hunger he designed.
But weird Melissa speedy aid supplied;
Who took a road, from home forth issuing, where
She met the Grecian Emperor's youthful heir;

Leo that, one by one, despatched his train
Of followers, far and wide, through every bourn,
And afterward, in person, went in vain,
To find the warrior of the unicorn.
The wise enchantress that with sell and rein,
Had on that day equipped a demon, borne
By him, in likeness of a hackney horse,
Constantine's son encountered in her course.

"If such as your ingenuous mien," she cried
To Leo, "is your soul's nobility,
And corresponding with your fair outside
Your inward goodness and your courtesy,
Some help, some comfort, sir, for one provide
In whom the best of living knights we see;
Who, save ye help and comfort quickly lend,
Is little distant from his latter end.

"The best of knights will die of all who don,
Or e'er donned, sword and buckler, the most fair
And gentle of all warriors that are gone,
Or who throughout the world yet living are,
And simply for a courteous deed, if none
Shall comfort to the youthful sufferer bear.
Then come, sir, for the love of Heaven, and try
If any counsel succor may supply."

It suddenly came into Leo's mind
The knight of whom she parleyed was that same
Whom throughout all the land he sought to find,
And seeking whom he now in person came.
So that, obeying her that would persuade
Such pious work, he spurred behind the dame,
Who thither led (nor tedious was the way)
Where nigh reduced to death the stripling lay.

They found Rogero fasting from all food
For three long days, so broken down with pain
The knight could but upon his feet have stood
To fall, albeit unpushed, to ground again.
With helm on head, and with his falchion good
Begirt, he lay reclined in plate and chain.
A pillow of his buckler had he made,
Where the white unicorn was seen portrayed.

There thinking what an injury he had done
To his lady love—how ingrate, how untrue
To her had been—not simple grief alone
O'erwhelmed him, to such height his fury grew,
He bit his hands and lips; while pouring down
His cheeks the tears unceasing ran, and through
The passion that so wrapt his troubled sprite,
Nor Leo nor Melissa heard the knight.

Nor therefore interrupts he his lament,
Nor checks his sighs, nor checks his trickling tears.
Young Leo halts, to hear his speech intent;
Lights from his courser, and toward him steers:
He knows that of the sorrows that torment
Love is the cause; but yet from nought appears
Who is the person that such grief hath bred;
For by Rogero this remains unsaid.

Him with the sweetest words young Leo plied,
And with the warmest love that he could show,
"Let it not irk thee," to the childe he cried,
"To tell the cause from which thy sorrows flow;
For few such desperate evils man betide,
But that there is deliverance from his woe,
So that the cause be known; nor he bereft
Of hope should ever be, so life be left.

"Much grieve I thou wouldst hide thyself from me,
That know me for thy faithful friend and true;
Not only now I am so bound to thee,
That I the knot can never more undo;
But even from the beginning, when to be
Thy deadly foeman I had reason due.
Hope then that I will succor thee with pelf,
With friends, with following, and with life itself."

He said; and with such forceful prayer appealed,
So gently and benignly soothed his moan,
That good Rogero could not choose but yield,
Whose heart was not of iron or of stone;
Who deemed, unless he now his lips unsealed,
He should a foul discourteous deed have done.
He fain would have replied, but made assay
Yet twice or thrice, ere words could find their way.

"My lord, when known for what I am (and me
Now shalt thou know)," he made at last reply,
"I wot thou, like myself, content will be,
And haply more content, that I should die.
Know me for him so hated once by thee;
Rogero who repaid that hate am I;
And now 'tis many days since with intent
Of putting thee to death from court I went.

"Because I would not see my promised bride
Borne off by thee; in that Duke Aymon's love
And favor was engaged upon thy side.
But, for man purposes, and God above
Disposes, thy great courtesy, well tried
In a sore need, my fixed resolve did move.
Nor only I renounced the hate I bore,
But purposed to be thine for evermore.

"What time I as Rogero was unknown,
Thou madest suit I would obtain for thee
The Lady Bradamant; which was all one
As to demand my heart and soul from me.
Whether thy wish I rather than mine own
Sought to content, thou hast been made to see.
Thine is the lady; her in peace possess;
Far more than mine I prize thy happiness.

"Content thee, that deprived of her, as well
I should myself of worthless life deprive;
For better I without a soul could dwell
Than without Bradamant remain alive.
And never while these veins with life-blood swell,
Canst thou with her legitimately wive:
For vows erewhile have been between us said;
Nor she at once can with two husbands wed."

So filled is gentle Leo with amaze
When he the stranger for Rogero knows,
With lips and brow unmoved, with steadfast gaze
And rooted feet, he like a statue shows;
Like statue more than man, which votaries raise
In churches, for acquittance of their vows.
He deems that courtesy of so high a strain
Was never done nor will be done again;

And that he him doth for Rogero know
Not only that goodwill he bore whilere
Abates not, but augments his kindness so,
That no less grieves the Grecian cavalier
Than good Rogero for Rogero's woe.
For this, as well as that he will appear
Deservedly an emperor's son—although
In other things outdone—he will not be
Defeated in the race of courtesy;

And says, "That day my host was overthrown,
Rogero, by thy wondrous valor, though
I had thee at despite, if I had known
Thou wast Rogero, as I know it now,
So me thy virtue would have made thine own
As then it made me, knowing not my foe;
So hatred from my bosom would have chased,
And with my present love have straight replaced.

"That I Rogero hated, ere I knew
Thou wast Rogero, will I not deny.
But think not that I further would pursue
The hatred that I bore thee; and had I,
When thee I from thy darksome dungeon drew,
Descried the truth, as this I now descry,
Such treatment shouldst thou then have had, as thou
Shalt have from me, to thine advantage, now.

"The damsel more to thee than me is due;
And though for her deserts I told her dear,
If that fair prize some happier mortal drew,
I think not I my vital thread should shear;
Nor would I by thy death be free to woo,
That from the hallowed bands of wedlock clear
Wherein the lady hath to thee been tied,
I might possess her as my lawful bride."

These words he spake, and more to that intent,
Too tedious in these verses to recite;
Refuting evermore such argument
As might be used in answer by the knight:
Who said, at last, "I yield, and am content
To live; but how can ever I requite
The obligation, which by me is owed
To thee that twice hast life on me bestowed?"

Melissa generous wine and goodly cheer
Thither bade carry, in a thought obeyed;
And comforted the mourning cavalier,
Who would have sunk without her friendly aid.
Meanwhile the sound of steeds Frontino's ear
Had reached, and thither had he quickly made.
Him Leo's squires at his commandment caught,
And saddled, and to good Rogero brought;

Who, though by Leo helped, with much ado
And labor sore the gentle courser scaled.
So wasted was the vigor that some few
Short days before, in fighting field, availed
To overthrow a banded host, and do
The deeds he did, in cheating armor mailed.
Departing thence, ere they had measured more
Than half a league, they reached an abbey hoar,

Wherein what of that day was yet unworn
They passed, the morrow, and succeeding day;
Until the warrior of the unicorn
His vigor had recruited by the stay.
He, Leo, and Melissa then return
To Charles's royal residence; where lay
An embassy, arrived the eve before,
Which from the Bulgar's land a message bore.

Since they that had for king proclaimed the knight
Besought Rogero thither to repair
Through these their envoys, deeming they would light
On him in Charles's court, where they should swear
Fidelity, and yield to him his right;
And he from them the crown receive and wear.
Rogero's squire who served this band to steer
Has published tidings of the cavalier.

He of the fight has told which at Belgrade
Erewhile Rogero for the Bulgars won;
How Leo and his sire were overlaid,
And all their army slaughtered and undone;
Wherefore the Bulgars him their king had made;
Their royal line excluding from the throne;
Then how Ungiardo took the warrior brave,
And him to cruel Theodora gave.

"Behold the champion good, that did maintain
From dawn till fall of day the furious fight;
And since by Bradamant nor taken, slain,
Nor forced beyond the barriers was the knight,
He is assured his victory is plain,
Dread sir, if he your edict reads aright;
And he hath won the lady for his wife;
So comes to claim the guerdon of the strife.

"Besides that by your edict's tenor none
But him can to the damsel lift his eyes,
Is she deserved by deeds of valor done,
What other is so worthy of the prize?
Should she by him that loves her best be won,
None passes him, nor with the warrior vies;
And he is here to fight against all foes
That would in arms his right in her oppose."

King Charlemagne and all his peerage stand
Amazed, who well believed the Grecian peer
With Bradamant had striven with lifted brand
In fight, and not that unknown cavalier.
Marphisa, thither borne amid the band
That crowded round the royal chair to hear,
Hardly till Leo made an ending staid;
Then prest before the listening troop, and said:

"Since here Rogero is not, to contest
The bride's possession with the stranger knight,
Lest he, as undefended, be opprest,
And forfeit so without dispute his right,
In his behalf I undertake this quest—
His sister I—against whatever wight
Shall here assert a claim to Bradamant,
Or more desert than good Rogero vaunt."

She spake this with such anger and disdain,
Many surmised amid the assistant crew,
That, without waiting leave from Charlemagne,
What she had threatened she forthwith would do.
No longer Leo deemed it time to feign;
And from Rogero's head the helm withdrew;
And to Marphisa, "For himself to speak,
Behold him here and ready!" cried the Greek.

As looked old Ægeus at the accursed board,
Seeing it was his son to whom—so willed
His wicked consort—that Athenian lord
Had given the juice from deadly drugs distilled;
Whom he, if he had recognized his sword
Though but a little later, would have killed;
So looked Marphisa when, disclosed to view,
She in the stranger knight Rogero knew;

And ran forthwith to clip the cavalier.
Nor could unclasp her arms: with loving show
Charlemagne, Roland, and Rinaldo, here
And there, fix friendly kisses on his brow.
Nor him Sir Dudon, nor Sir Olivier,
Nor King Sobrino can caress enow:
Nor paladin nor peer, amid the crew,
Wearies of welcoming that warrior true.

Leo, who well can play the spokesman, now
That warlike band hath ceased to clip the knight,
Tells before Charles and all that audience, how
Rogero's daring, how Rogero's might—
Albeit to his good squadron's scathe and woe—
Which at Belgrade he witnessed in that fight,
So moved him that they overweighed all harms
Inflicted on him by the warrior's arms.

So that to her Rogero being brought,
Who would all havoc of the youth have made,
He setting all his family at nought,
Had out of durance vile the knight conveyed;
And how Rogero, that the rescue wrought
By Leo might be worthily repaid,
Did that high courtesy; which can by none,
That ever were or e'er will be, outdone.

And he from point to point continuing, said
That which Rogero had for him achieved:
And after, how by sorrow sore bestead,
In that to leave his cherished wife he grieved,
He had resolved to die, and, almost dead,
Was only by his timely aid relieved;
And this he told so movingly no eye
Remained, amid those martial many, dry.

So efficaciously he after prayed
To the obstinate Duke Aymon, not alone
The stubborn sire of Bradamant he swayed,
And to forego his settled purpose won;
But that proud lord in person did persuade
To beg Rogero's pardon, and his son
And son-in-law-to-be beseech the knight;
And thus to him his Bradamant was plight.

To her, where, of her feeble life in doubt,
She in a secret chamber made lament,
Through many a messenger, with joyful shout
And mickle haste, the happy tidings went.
Hence the warm blood, that stagnated about
Her heart, by her first sorrow thither sent,
Ebbed at this notice in so full a tide,
Well nigh for sudden joy the damsel died.

Those envoys of the Bulgars that had made
For Charles's court (as hath erewhile been shown),
Hoping to find the knight whose shield portrayed
The unicorn elected to their throne,
Bless the good fortune which their hope repaid,
Seeing that valiant warrior, and fall down
Before his feet, and him in humble speech
Again to seek their Bulgary beseech.

He accepts the realm, by their entreaties won;
And, to afford them aid against their foes,
Will wend to Bulgary when three months are done;
Save Fortune otherwise of him dispose.
When this is heard by that Greek Emperor's son,
He bids Rogero on his faith repose;
For since by him the Bulgars' realm is swayed,
Peace between them and Constantine is made.

The rich and royal nuptials they prepare
As well befits him by whose care 'tis done,
'Tis done by Charles; and with such cost and care
As if 'twere for a daughter of his own.
For such the merits of the damsel are,
And such had all her martial kindred shown,
Charles would not think he should exceed due measure
If spent for her was half his kingdom's treasure.

He a free court bids cry; whither his way
Securely every one that wills may wend;
And offers open lists till the ninth day
To whosoever would in arms contend;
And bids build bowers afield, and interlay
Green boughs therein, and flowers and foliage blend;
And make those bowers so gay with silk and gold,
No fairer place this ample world doth hold.

The weird Melissa, 'gainst the coming night,
With singular and matchless ornament
Had for that pair the nuptial chamber dight;
Whereon long time before she had been bent;
Long time before desirous of the rite
Had been that dame, presageful of the event;
Presageful of futurity, she knew
What goodly fruit should from their stem ensue.

She with young Leo's leave, or rather so
The Grecian's admiration to obtain,
And a rare token of that art to show,
Which on Hell's mighty dragon puts the rein,
And at her pleasure rules that impious foe
Of Heaven, together with this evil train,
Bade demons the pavilion through mid aid
To Paris from Constantinople bear.

From Constantine that lay therein, who swayed
The Grecian empire's scepter, at mid-day
This with its cordage, shaft whereby 'twas stayed,
And all within and out, she bore away;
And of the costly tent, through air conveyed,
For young Rogero made a lodging gay.
The bridal ended, this her demon crew
Thither, from whence 'twas brought, conveyed anew.

That Constantine, whom thou shalt ever rue
Fair Italy, while the heavens above are rolled.
Constantine to Byzantium, when he grew
Weary of Tyber, bore the tent of old.
Melissa from his namesake this withdrew,
Its pole of ivory and its cords of gold,
And all its cloth with beauteous figures fraught;
Fairer Apelles' pencil never wrought.

Though not instructed in that history
Like gentle Bradamant, the affianced knight
Remembers how amid his progeny
Atlantes often praised this Hippolyte.
Who faithfully could verse such courtesy,
As Charlemagne vouchsafed to every wight?
With various games that solemn feast was cheered,
And charged with viands aye the board appeared.

Who is a valiant knight, is here descried;
For daily broke a thousand lances lay;
Singly to combat or in troops they ride;
On horseback or afoot, they mix in fray.
Worthiest of all, Rogero is espied,
Who always conquers, jousting night and day;
And so, in wrestling, dance, and every deed,
Still from his rivals bears away the meed.

On the last day, when at their festive cheer
Was seated solemnly the assembled band,
Where at Charles' left was placed the wedded peer,
And Bradamant upon his better hand,
Across the fields an armed cavalier,
Of semblance haughty, and of stature grand,
Was seen to ride toward the royal table;
Himself and courser wholly clothed in sable.

The King of Argier he; that for the scorn
Received from her, when on the bridge he fell,
Never to clothe himself in arms had sworn,
Nor draw the falchion nor bestride the sell,
Till he had like an anchoret outworn
A year and month and day in lowly cell.
So to chastise themselves for such like crimes
Were cavaliers accustomed in those times.

Albeit of Charles and Agramant the Moor
Had heard the several fortunes while away,
Not to forswear himself, he armed no more
Than if in nought concerned in that affray:
But when the year and month were wholly o'er,
And wholly past was the succeeding day,
With other courser, harness, sword, and lance,
The King betook him to the court of France.

He neither lighted from his horse nor bowed
His head; and, without sign of reverence due,
His scorn for Charlemagne by gestures showed,
And the high presence of so fair a crew.
Astound and full of wonder stood the crowd,
Such license in that haughty man to view.
All leave their meat, all leave their talk, to hear
The purpose of the stranger cavalier.

To Charles and to Rogero opposite,
With a loud voice, and in proud accent, "I
Am Rodomont of Sarza," said the knight,
"Who thee, Rogero, to the field defy;
And here, before the sun withdraws his light,
Will prove on thee thine infidelity:
And that thou, as a traitor to thy lord,
Deserv'st not any honor at this board.

"Albeit thy felony be plain and clear,
Which thou, as christened, canst not disavow;
Nathless to make it yet more plain appear,
This will I prove upon thee; and, if thou
Canst find a knight to combat for thee here,
Him will accept—if one be not enow,
Will four, nay six accept; and will maintain
My words against them all in listed plain."

Rogero, with the leave of Pepin's son,
Uprose at that appeal, and thus replied:
"That he—nor he alone, but every one,
Who thus impeached him as a traitor, lied;
That so he by his King had ever done,
Him none could justly blame; and on his side,
He was prepared in listed field to shew
He evermore by him had done his due.

"He can defend himself; nor need he crave
Another warrior's help that course to run;
And tis his hope to show him he would have
Enough, perhaps would have too much, of one."
Thither Orlando and Rinaldo, brave
Olivier, and his white and sable son,
Thither good Dudon and Marphisa wend;
Who fain with that fierce paynim will contend.

They tell Rogero that, as newly wed,
The combat he in person should refuse.
"Take ye no further pains," the warrior said,
For such would be for me a foul excuse."
The Tartar's arms were brought, which cut the thread
Of more delay and of all further truce.
With spurs Orlando deck'd the youthful lord,
King Charlemagne begirt him with the sword.

Marphisa and Bradamant in corslet case
His breast, and clothe him in his other gear.
Astolpho led his horse of noble race;
Sir Dudon held his stirrup; far and near
Rinaldo and Namus made the mob give place,
Assisted by the Marquis Olivier.
All from the crowded lists they drive with speed,
Evermore kept in order for such need.

Bradamant's heart above those others' beat:
Not that she deemed the Saracen in might,
Or valor which in the heart-core hath its seat,
Was of more prowess than the youthful knight,
Nor (what oft gives success in martial feat)
That with the paynim was the better right.
Yet cannot she some ill misgivings quell.
But upon those that love such fear sits well.

Oh! in her fear for him, how willingly
She battle for Rogero would have done!
If lifeless on the listed field to lie
Surer than sure, in fight with Ulien's son.
More than one death would she consent to die,
If she withal could suffer more than one,
Rather than she in that unhappy strife
Would see her cherished consort risk his life.

But prayer availed not on the damsel's part
To make Rogero leave to her the quest;
She then with mournful face and beating heart
Stood by to view that pair to fight addrest.
From right and left the peer and paynim start,
And at each other run with lance in rest.
The spears seem ice, as they in shivers fly,
The fragments birds, that mount through middle sky.

Rodomont's lance, which smote in the career
Upon mid-shield, yet harmed it little; so
Perfect was famous Hector's iron gear.
Hardened by Vulcan's hand, and safe from blow.
As well against the shield his levelled spear
Rogero guides, and that good buckler—though
Well steeled within and out, with bone between,
And nigh a palm in thickness—pierces clean:

And—but his lance resists not that fierce shock,
And at the first assault its splinters fly,
And bits and fragments of the shivered stock
Seem fledged with feathers they ascend so high;
Were his arms hewn from adamantine rock,
The spear would pierce the paynim's panoply;
And end that battle; but it breaks withal,
And on their croups both staggering coursers fall.

With bridle and with spur the martial pair
Raise their proud horses nimbly from the ground;
And having broke their spears, with falchions bare
Return, to bandy fierce and cruel wound.
Wheeling with wondrous mastery, here and there,
The bold and ready coursers in a round,
The warriors with their biting swords begin
To try where either's armor is most thin.

Rodomont had not that hard dragon-hide
Which heretofore had cased the warrior's breast;
Nor Nimrod's trenchant sword was at his side;
Nor the accustomed helm his temples prest.
For on that bridge which spanned the narrow tide
A loser to Dordona's lady, vest
And arms suspended from the votive stone
He left as I, meseems, erewhile have shown.

Clad was the King in other goodly mail,
Yet not like that first panoply secure;
But neither this, nor that, nor harder scale
Could Belisarda's deadly dint endure;
Against which neither workmanship avail,
Enchantment, temper, nor prime steel and pure.
So here so there Rogero plied his sword,
He more than once the paynim's armor bored.

When Rodomont beholds in that fierce close
His widely crimsoned arms, nor can restrain
The greater portion of those griding blows
From biting to the quick, through plate and chain,
He with more fury, with more rage o'erflows,
Than in mid winter the tempestuous main,
Flings down his shield, and with both hands outright
Lays at Rogero's helm with all his might.

With that excessive force, wherewith the gin,
Erected in two barges upon Po,
And raised by men and wheels, with deafening din
Descends upon the sharpened piles below,
With all his might he smote the paladin
With either hand; was never direr blow:
Him the charmed helmet helped, or—such its force—
The stroke would have divided man and horse.

As if about to fall, the youthful lord
Twice nodded, opening legs and arms; anew
Rodomont smote, in that he would afford
His foe no time his spirits to renew;
Then threatened other stroke; but that fine sword
Bore not such hammering, and in shivers flew;
And the bold Saracen, bereft of brand,
Was in the combat left with unarmed hand.

But not for this doth Rodomont refrain;
He swoops upon the childe unheeding aught.
So sore astounded is Rogero's brain,
So wholly overclouded is his thought.
But him the paynim well awakes again,
Whom by the neck he with strong arm has caught,
And grips and grapples with such mighty force,
He falls on earth, pulled headlong from his horse.

Yet leaps from earth as nimbly, moved by spleen
Far less than shame; for on his gentle bride
He turned his eyes, and that fair face serene
Now troubled the disdainful warrior spied.
She in sore doubt her champion's fall had seen;
And well nigh at that sight the lady died.
Rogero, quickly to revenge the affront,
Clutches his sword and faces Rodomont.

He at Rogero rode, who that rude shock
Shunned warily, retiring from his ground,
And, as he passed, the paynim's bridle took
With his left hand, and turned his courser round;
While with his right he at his rider struck,
Whom he in belly, flank, and breast would wound;
And twice sore anguish felt the monarch, gored
In flank and thigh by good Rogero's sword.

Rodomont, grasping still in that close fight
The hilt and pommel of his broken blade,
Laid at Rogero's helmet with such might,
That him another stroke might have dismayed;
But good Rogero, who should win of right,
Seizing his arm, the King so rudely swayed,
Bringing his left his better hand to speed,
That he pulled down the paynim from his steed.

Through force or skill, so fell the Moorish lord,
He stood his match, I rather ought to say
Fell on his feet; because Rogero's sword
Gave him, 'twas deemed, advantage in the fray.
Rogero stands aloof, with wary ward,
As fain to keep the paynim King at bay.
For the wise champion will not let a wight
So tall and bulky close with him in fight;

Rogero flank and thigh dyed red beheld,
And other wounds; and hoped he would have failed,
By little and by little, as it welled;
So that he finally should have prevailed.
His hilt and pommel in his fist still held
The paynim, which with all his might he scaled
At young Rogero; whom he smote so sore,
The stripling never was so stunned before.

In the helmet-cheek and shoulder-bone below
The childe was smit, and left so sore astound.
He, tripping still and staggering to and fro,
Scarce kept himself from falling to the ground.
Rodomont fain would close upon his foe;
But his foot fails him, weakened by the wound
That pierecd his thigh; he overtasked his might,
And on his kneepan fell the paynim knight.

Rogero lost no time, and with fierce blows
Smotè him in face and bosom with his brand;
Hammered, and held the Saracen so close,
To ground he bore that champion with his hand.
But he so stirred himself, again he rose:
He grips Rogero so, fast locked they stand.
Seconding their huge vigor by address,
They circle one another, shake, and press.

His wounded thigh and gaping flank had sore
Weakened the vigor of the Moorish King:
Rogero had address; had mickle lore;
Was greatly practised in the wrestlers' ring.
He marked his vantage, nor from strife forbore;
And, where he saw the blood most freely spring,
And where most wounded was the warrior, prest
The paynim with his feet, his arms, and breast.

Rodomont filled with spite and rage, his foe
  Takes by the neck and shoulders, and now bends
Toward him, and now pushes from him; now
  Raises from earth, and on his chest suspends;
Whirls here and there and grapples; and to throw
  The stripling sorely in that strife contends.
Collected in himself, Rogero wrought,
To keep his vantage taxing strength and thought.

So shifting oft his hold, about the Moor
  His arms the good and bold Rogero wound;
Against his left flank shoved his breast, and sore
  Strained him with all his strength engirdled round,
At once he passed his better leg before
  Rodomont's knees and pushed, and from the ground
Uplifted high in air the Moorish lord;
Then hurled him down head foremost on the sward.

Such was the shock wherewith King Rodomont
  With battered head and spine the champaign smote,
That, issuing from his wounds as from a font,
  Streams of red blood the crimsoned herbage float.
Rogero, holding Fortune by the front,
  Lest he should rise, with one hand gripped his throat,
With one a dagger at his eyes addrest,
And with his knees the paynim's belly prest.

As sometimes where they work the golden vein
  Within Pannonian or Iberian cave,
If unexpected ruin whelm the train
  By impious avarice there condemned to slave,
So with the load they lie oppress't, with pain
  A passage can their prisoned spirit have:
No less oppressed the doughty paynim lay,
Pinned to the ground in that disastrous fray.

Rogero at his vizor doth present
  His naked poniard's point, with threatening cry,
That he will slay him, save he yields, content
  To let him live, if he for grace apply.
But Rodomont, who rather than be shent
  For the least deed of shame, preferred to die,
Writhed, struggled, and with all his vigor tried
To pull Rogero down and naught replied.

As mastiff that below the deer-hound lies
  Fixed by the gullet fast, with holding bite,
Sorely bestirs himself and vainly tries,
  With lips besmeared with foam and eyes alight,
And cannot from beneath the conqueror rise,
  Who foils his foe by force, and not despite;
So vainly strives the monarch of Argier
To rise from underneath the cavalier.

Yet Rodomont so twists and strives, he gains
The freedom of his better arm anew;
And with the right hand, which his poniard strains,
For he had drawn his deadly dagger too,
Would wound Rogero underneath the reins;
But now the wary youth the error knew
Through which he might have died, by his delay
That impious Saracen forthwith to slay;

And smiting twice or thrice his horrid front,
Raising as high as he could raise in air
His dagger, buried it in Rodomont;
And freed himself withal from further care.
Loosed from the more than icy corse, to font
Of fetid Acheron, and hell's foul repair,
The indignant spirit fled, blaspheming loud,
Erewhile on earth so haughty and so proud.

1044 1

DATE DUE

GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

SCHEELE MEMORIAL LIBRARY
3 6655 00030348 7
PQ4567 .A2
Ariosto, Lodovico, /Orlando fu

PQ
4567
.A2

9,380

PQ
4567
.A2

Ariosto, Ludovico.
Orlando Furioso.

9,380

DATE	ISSUED TO

CONCORDIA COLLEGE LIBRARY
BRONXVILLE, N. Y. 10708